

Deposed emir seeks Kuwait's support

KUWAIT (R) — Qatar's deposed emir arrived in Kuwait on Saturday on an Arab Gulf tour intended to rally support for his return to power. Officials said Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah received Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani who was ousted by his son Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani in a bloodless coup in June. The former emir has said his tour of Arab Gulf states was aimed at rallying support for his return to power in Qatar, which controls the world's single largest gas field and the world's third largest proven gas reserves. The official Kuwait news agency earlier called the visit a "brotherly" one. Sheikh Khalifa is also expected to visit Saudi Arabia and Oman, diplomats said. He has already been to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Differences between Qatar and the other five Arab Gulf allies rose to the surface on Dec. 6 when the current emir refused to attend the closing session of the annual Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit. Qatar, which is scheduled to host next year's GCC summit, is opposed to the method used in appointing a new GCC secretary general when Doha's candidate was dropped in favour of a Saudi national.

Haiti thanks Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Haitian Prime Minister Smark Mensehel expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to His Majesty King Hussein and the government of Jordan for the effective contribution of Jordanian Armed Forces within the U.N. multinational forces and the U.N. mission in Haiti. In a message sent to Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the Haitian prime minister stressed the fact that Jordan's response to international humanitarian efforts was unmatched at a crucial stage of Haiti's history. This response was clearly manifested in sending Jordanian security forces to help restore democracy in Haiti, the prime minister said.

Egypt sacks railways head

CAIRO (R) — President Hosni Mubarak sacked the head of Egypt's railway authority Saturday after 77 people were killed in two accidents in nine days which both involved trains ramming into the back of each other. Mr. Mubarak ordered in a presidential decree that Abdul Salam Shaath be relieved of his post immediately following the worst accident in the Egyptian railways for more than 15 years. Newspapers reported Saturday that two people were killed and eight injured when a northbound train from the southern Minya province rammed into the back of another that was heading for the capital. The driver of the Minya train and a passenger were killed in the collision. Officials at the scene blamed thick fog for the crash, the government newspaper Akhbar Al Youm said. Last Thursday, 75 people were killed and 76 injured when a crowded workers' train rammed a passenger train from behind in thick fog in the town of Badrasheh. The train drivers blamed fog for the collision that highlighted the poor safety record of level-crossing systems.

EU to set up Cyprus initiative

ROME (AFP) — Italy is to launch a peace mission for the divided Mediterranean island of Cyprus shortly after it takes over the rotating European Union presidency next week. Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli said Friday. She said a top foreign ministry official, Emanuele Scammaro, would visit Cyprus, Greece and Turkey from Jan. 4 to 6, to see how the EU could help with the peace process. Cyprus is divided into a Greek Cypriot region, whose government is recognised by the United Nations and the world community, and a northern Turkish Cypriot region, where the administration is recognised only by Turkey. Talks have been going on at the U.N. for several years on trying to resolve the dispute. Italy will be taking over the six-month presidency from Spain on Jan. 1.

UNHCR begins probe in Sudan

GENEVA (AFP) — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has launched an inquiry into claims by Ethiopia that refugees in Sudan had been arrested, tortured and murdered, a spokeswoman said on Saturday. "We are taking these allegations very seriously," UNHCR spokeswoman Ruth Marshall said. A letter from the Ethiopian government to the UNHCR, made public Thursday, gave a detailed account of how Ethiopian refugees in Sudan were the victims of "harassment and continuous persecution," she said. Ethiopia said two refugees had been killed, one tortured and 220 arrested, including 53 whose whereabouts were not known and 35 who were expelled back to Ethiopia. Ms. Marshall said the UNHCR was checking out each case cited.

King expresses hope East Jerusalem will be capital of Palestine

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية ناطقة بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية - الراي

King expresses hope East Jerusalem will be capital of Palestine

LONDON (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein said that Jordan believes Jerusalem should remain "a symbol for peace for all believers in God, and sovereignty over the city should not belong to any single state."

In an interview with the London-based Al Wasat magazine, the King said that Arab Jerusalem has been an occupied city since 1967, expressing hope that "it will become the capital of Palestine as the western part of the city is the capital of Israel, something which has not been recognised until now."

Asked about the U.S.

administration's response to Jordan's military requirements, the King said the response has been encouraging: "We are hoping to achieve good results from a visit by the U.S. defence secretary to Jordan on Jan. 3-5."

Asked about Jordanian-Saudi relations, the King said that these relations were very good and on the way to returning to their required level of brotherly ties.

"I hope the circumstances will allow my brother King Fahd and myself to meet soon, and I am confident that the meeting will open the way for the return of bilateral relations to their best."

Asked about relations with Kuwait he said: "We do not attach any conditions to resuming these relations. We have taken all the initiatives hoping that the relations will return to normal. But we cannot offer any more in this respect. I believe it is a matter of time when our Kuwaiti brothers choose to cooperate and establish solid relations based on sound foundations, we will welcome their move. We have nothing else to say."

Replying to a question about the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations, the King expressed hope that the two sides will achieve progress so that a comprehensive peace in the region could be established.

On a future Jordanian-Palestinian confederation the King said that there would not be any talk about such confederation at this stage before the Palestinians attain

their full rights on their national soil in a manner acceptable to them.

"Then and in an atmosphere of freedom and brotherly dialogue and on a background of strong relations the people can determine their position regarding the future and the nature of relations."

"We will continue to help the Palestinian brothers with our full power and potential and under all circumstances until they arrive at their aspired objectives," the King said.

Asked about Israeli passports issued to Arab residents of Jerusalem and whether Jordan will be ready to issue permanent passports to the Palestinians, the King said: "If it is a matter of passports the question should be discussed with the Palestinian brothers. But I believe that the Jerusalem question is one that has been placed on the agenda of the final stage of the negotiations which starts after the Israeli elections and the settlement of the Jerusalem issue within the framework of the agreed programme."

On Iraq, the King said: "Iraq is very important to us and we consider the suffering of the Iraqi people as our own. We are deeply affected with what has been going on. We believe that Iraq is at the threshold of a very difficult stage. Either the country and its unity are saved through the meeting of all Iraqi factions at the national level or the country will be facing further disasters and further

prospects of dismemberment and disintegration, with all the danger that these developments might entail."

(Continued on page 7)



PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat Saturday leans forward to wave to the tens of thousands of supporters gathered below as he speaks from the roof of the former Israeli military compound, now the headquarters of Mr. Arafat's Palestinian police and security forces (Reuters photo)

Arafat enters Ramallah

RAMALLAH (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat declared the West Bank town of Ramallah "free forever" as he paid a triumphant first visit on Saturday following the end of 28 years of Israeli occupation.

Israel handed over control of Ramallah, considered the West Bank's economic capital, to Mr. Arafat's self-rule authority on Wednesday under a deal spreading autonomy across the West Bank.

Standing on the roof of the new Palestinian police headquarters, he told tens of thousands of cheering supporters: "Before you, I declare the town of Ramallah free forever."

He earlier swept into Ramallah on board a helicopter which landed in the courtyard of the police building, which had served as the Israeli military administration offices.

"Today we are writing the history of Palestine, of a free Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital," he said.

He also paid tribute to some 5,000 Palestinians still held in Israeli jails. "The day of your freedom is near," he said.

Mr. Arafat was interrupted several times by the crowd who chanted "we are ready to sacrifice our lives and blood for you Abu Ammar," his nom de guerre.

The town was bedecked with Palestinian flags and portraits of the veteran PLO leader, who was cheered and applauded by wellwishers from Ramallah and surrounding villages.

The police headquarters were draped with welcoming banners, and hundreds of onlookers crowded rooftops and balconies to catch a glimpse of Mr. Arafat.

Scouts beat drums and riders on horseback joined the festivities in Ramallah, the seventh West Bank town handed over to Palestinian control under the self-rule accords that also launched autonomy in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Arafat also called for a massive turnout in self-rule elections set for Jan. 20, particularly by inhabitants of annexed East Jerusalem in order to "reinforce the Arab character of the town."

Israel conquered the Arab eastern sector in the 1967 war and so far 45,000 of the city's eligible 70,000 Palestinian voters have registered.

Some fear that they will lose social benefits and freedom of travel given by the Israeli authorities if they participate.

"You must support the best candidates, and if you want to criticise them don't hesitate to do so," said Mr. Arafat, who is expected to easily defeat his only challenger for president of the new executive council.

Later, Mr. Arafat chaired a cabinet meeting in the city. The meeting grouped only five ministers following the resignation of 11 others who plan to stand in Palestinian general elections next month.

Meanwhile, the launch of the campaign for the elections has been delayed for a week until Jan. 7, a member of the electoral commission said Saturday.

Ussama Abu Safa also said that registration of candidates for the polls, originally due to close on Dec. 24, was being extended until midnight on Sunday.

The election campaign was due to start on Saturday. Its postponement, cutting

(Continued on page 3)

Violence in S. Lebanon dampens positive spirit of Syria-Israel negotiations in U.S.

Tel Aviv demands Damascus halt attacks

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel on Saturday demanded that Syria rein in Hizbollah guerrillas after they rocketed northern Israel and wounded two soldiers in an ambush.

The flare-up in violence came after Israel and Syria both gave positive assessments of peace talks in Washington, which ended on Friday but were to continue informally over the coming days.

The Iranian-backed Hizbollah fired two salvos of Katyusha rockets into northern Israel on Friday night in retaliation for Israeli shelling of South Lebanon, which left one man dead and four members of his family wounded.

An Israeli army spokesman said the first wave caused no damage while the second hit several homes in the northern Galilee region, without causing casualties.

Residents of northern Israel spent the night in shelters but were allowed to come out on Saturday morning.

Pro-Israel security sources in South Lebanon said another attack was launched Saturday. No group claimed immediate responsibility for the attack.

In Jerusalem, Israeli security sources said no rockets had fallen in Israel since early Saturday morning and there were no reports of a fresh Katyusha attack.

Israel pinned blame for the attacks on Syria, which it accuses of controlling Hizbollah.

Israeli radio said U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher telephoned Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa on Saturday over the rocketing.

"This attack comes at the worst possible time," it quoted Mr. Christopher as saying. He asked that Syria make maximum efforts to control the situation and Mr. Sharaa replied that Syria was against a military escalation, the radio said.

Earlier, a statement from Prime Minister Shimon Peres' office said: "Israel views these attacks seriously

and will act in consequence to defend the security of its border communities."

It said Mr. Peres had called on the United States to transmit a message to Syria to stop the Hizbollah actions.

Hizbollah fighters later also hit an army jeep with a missile near Barasheet on the edge of the occupied "security zone" in South Lebanon, wounding two soldiers, the army said.

The Islamic Resistance, Hizbollah's armed wing, claimed it had destroyed a Centurion tank in an "ambush set by our fighters."

Israeli artillery fired more than 70 shells in retaliation

(Continued on page 7)

Yemen hails return of prisoners, but wants Eritrean withdrawal from island

SANAA (AFP) — More than 200 Yemeni prisoners captured during Eritrea's seizure of Hanish Al Kabir on Dec. 18. Nine soldiers died in the three-day battle over the strategic Red Sea island which both countries claim.

Yemen hailed their release — one of its conditions for talks on the dispute — but renewed calls for Eritrea to withdraw its forces from the island of Hanish Al Kabir (Greater Hanish).

A first group of 105 soldiers, including 20 wounded, arrived in Sanaa on a plane chartered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a government official said.

The aircraft returned to Asmara later in the day and flew back with the remaining soldiers and civilians. The Red Cross said it repatriated a total of 196 soldiers and 17

civilians.

The Yemeni prisoners were captured during Eritrea's seizure of Hanish Al Kabir on Dec. 18. Nine soldiers died in the three-day battle over the strategic Red Sea island which both countries claim.

"The release of the prisoners is a positive step," Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani told reporters. "Yemen's position is clear. Eritrea must pull out its military forces occupying the island."

Yemen had earlier accused Eritrea of dragging its feet over the releases, but the official Eritrea Profile weekly rejected the charge on Saturday.

"The government of Eritrea, true to its promise, released the Yemeni soldiers and continues to strive to resolve the problem in a

peaceful manner," the weekly said.

"The Yemenis continue to issue inflammatory statements, preconditions, threats and resort to intimidation."

The prisoners were taken from an army barracks on the edge of Asmara early Saturday and transferred to the waiting aircraft. Smiling and looking relaxed, they waved to local people from their buses.

An Eritrean government official said the release was a "gesture of goodwill."

Meanwhile, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali met Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh here Saturday as part of intensive international mediation efforts.

Dr. Ghali, quoted by Yemen's official news agency, SABA, said the United Nations was prepared to offer its good offices if Sanaa and

Asmara both agreed. He was due in Asmara on Sunday.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, whose country is already mediating, said Friday that Yemen and Eritrea had agreed in principle to demilitarise the disputed islands, which guard access to strategic Red Sea shipping lanes.

Mr. Meles was speaking after separate meetings with the Eritrean and Yemeni presidents.

Eritrea has called for a joint pullback from all 200 islands in the archipelago followed by international arbitration to resolve the dispute.

But Mr. Iryani said Saturday: "We hope the conflict is resolved on a regional basis, because international arbitration will complicate it further."

ARAB BANK

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Rocket attacks kill 8 in Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — Eight Afghan civilians were killed and 41 injured when a deadly new wave of rocket and shell salvos struck the besieged capital Kabul, witnesses and doctors said Saturday.

Four separate barrages of artillery shells and rockets fired by the Taliban militia blockading Kabul hit three areas of the city between late Thursday and late Friday, defence officials and witnesses said.

The latest series of barrages came as a Taliban spokesman in Pakistan roundly rejected an unconditional offer by Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani that he travel to opposition strongholds — including the Taliban centre at Kandahar — for talks on resolving the country's protracted civil war.

A heavy artillery attack late Thursday killed two children, two women and a man in a city street instantly, while three other victims of the assault died later in hospital, they added.

A further 23 people were

wounded in that attack, while another 18 were injured in three other attacks late Friday, doctors at Kabul's hospitals told AFP.

Two of the salvos — one of artillery shells and one BM 21 rockets — struck a densely populated high-rise residential zone in the east of the war-battered capital Friday, injuring eight residents.

"It is miraculous that more people were not hurt or killed," said Rafiq Homar, whose fourth-floor flat was peppered with artillery shrapnel and had its windows blown out.

"We were in bed when there was an almighty explosion very close by. Then a huge fragment of shell hit the wall just a few feet above my head, leaving a deep crater.

"Some people's homes were completely shattered by the blasts, while hundreds of residents lost their windows, which is very difficult to deal with in the middle of a cold winter," he said.

One of the eight shells and rockets plummeted through the roof of a room in a

top-floor flat, but the owners of the apartment escaped unscathed, neighbours said.

The attacks, over a period of 24 hours, marked the fiercest and deadliest series of barrages of Kabul over recent weeks, and came after the Kabul administration appeared to extend an olive branch to other warring factions.

The defence ministry here accused the Taliban of launching the attacks from their bases south of Kabul and expressed shock at the barrages.

"We are surprised that after we offered them the opportunity of talks that they have again fired rockets randomly and deliberately on the city," a defence source said.

In an unprecedented show of apparent flexibility, Mr. Rabbani on Wednesday agreed to travel to provincial opposition bases to discuss the formation of a broad-based government for war-torn Afghanistan.

The offer includes possible talks with all factional lead-

ers, including the Taliban, Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum and with ex-premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, top officials here said.

It was the first time the president, or any member of his beleaguered government, had proposed such talks outside of Kabul, and came amid growing speculation that top administration figures are already talking to leaders of other groups, including Mr. Dostum and Mr. Hekmatyar's parties.

However the Taliban, who regard the Kabul government as illegitimate, have dismissed Mr. Rabbani's offer as a manoeuvre to gain time for military preparations at a time when his administration is under pressure.

More than 60 civilians have been killed in rocket and shell attacks on Kabul during December, while hundreds of others have been injured.

The government has routinely blamed the attacks on the Taliban, who are besieging the city on three sides and threatening to seize it and topple Mr. Rabbani.



ISRAELI SOLDIER HOLDING KATYUSHA FRAGMENT: Israeli soldier holding a Katyusha fragment in a home demolished by the rocket early Saturday. Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon fired Katyusha rockets at Israel causing damage but no casualties. See Page 1 story (Reuters photo)

First Afghan film since fall of communism released

KABUL (R) — An Afghan film company released on Saturday the first feature-length movie completed entirely in Afghanistan since the fall of the communist government early in 1994.

The director of the production company, Sidiq Barmaque, said problems caused by the civil war meant it took two and a half years to make the movie, called "Urui" (Ascension).

"We finished filming in just three months in the summer of 1993," he said. "But a lack of electricity, equipment that kept breaking down and a shortage of funds meant we couldn't get the post-production work done until now."

"When we tried to buy

The two and a half hour epic traces the transformation of a humble village baker into a Mujahideen fighter battling Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan during the 1980s.

The company, Afghan Films, had to shoot the film in the north-central province of Parwan because it was the only area it had access to that was free of fighting between rival Mujahideen factions.

Those factions are still battling one another for control of the country.

In a tragic twist to the film's production, two of the stars were killed this year when a rocket exploded on the studios during the battle for Kabul between pro-

government forces and the Taliban Islamic militia.

All the actors in the movie

Barmaque said those who played Russians were too embarrassed to attend the premiere.

"They did a wonderful job. But I think they feel they played such convincing roles that they were ashamed to come and admit it was really them," he said.

Producer Noor Hashem Abir said the movie cost \$5 million (about \$40,000) to make and was funded by the government and private investors.

"They all wanted to help re-establish the important role of theatre in this country before it was suppressed and controlled by the old regime," Mr. Abir said.

"We hope that by making this film and the two others we are planning, we will be able to re-equip ourselves and re-train people to get the Afghan film industry moving again," he added.

Family of Jihad leader barred from leaving Gaza Strip

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Israeli authorities have barred the family of Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Abdullah Shallah from leaving the Gaza Strip to join him in Beirut, the Palestinian militant group said Saturday.

Maha Abdul Karim Nasser and her three children tried to leave self-ruled Gaza at the Rafah crossing with Egypt on Friday, the group said from Damascus. But they were stopped by Israeli authorities who control the borders.

In Gaza City, friends of the family said the wife arrived for a visit after Mr. Shallah was named to head Islamic Jihad in late October. She

came from the United States while her husband travelled directly to Beirut.

The children are naturalised Americans, Islamic Jihad said.

Mr. Shallah succeeded Fathi Shaqaqi after his assassination Oct. 26 by a suspected Israeli hit squad in Malta. Mr. Shaqaqi was based in the Syrian capital while the new chief has his headquarters in Damascus.

The new leader of Islamic Jihad, which has mounted anti-Israeli attacks aimed at sabotaging the autonomy deals, left Gaza in 1984 to study in Egypt, Britain and the United States before settling in Lebanon.

Palestinian media favours Fatah party in elections

JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian radio and television overwhelmingly favour candidates from Yasser Arafat's Fatah party in the campaign to elect the first self-rule government Jan. 20, a media watchdog group said Saturday.

"A very sizeable imbalance exists between the different candidates and parties' access to Palestinian public radio and television," according to a Dec. 15-25 survey completed by Reporters Without Borders.

The Palestinian election campaign officially started Dec. 30 and runs through Jan. 18 to elect an 87-member autonomy council and a president to the executive council.

Fatah, the main faction of Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is the only party to have had real access to television, with one hour, 11 minutes, 35 seconds of air time during the survey period.

The Palestinian People's Party, a communist group, is the only other political faction to have appeared on television and it received only 17 seconds of air time, the report said.

As for overall programming, Fatah received five times more air time than the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which opposes the PLO peace deal with Israel.

However, Arab programming on Israeli public radio and television "provides equal access to different political groups: 4 mins, 10 secs to Fatah, 2 mins, 9 secs to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which is opposed to the autonomy accords, and 1 min, 2 secs for Hamas," the study said.

Mr. Arafat, a candidate for president of the executive council, had more than an hour on Palestinian radio and television, while his sole rival, Samiha Khalil, a left-wing community activist, received

no time. Reporters Without Borders said.

Palestinian radio and television stations are currently operated by Mr. Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA) which will be replaced by the new self-rule government.

The written press, however, had a "much more diversified image," with 20 groups or parties having access, the study said.

Reporters Without Borders, an independent organisation devoted to freedom of the press, has been monitoring the Palestinian media and press for the upcoming elections. Fifteen observers are participating in the project, financed by the European Union.

The historic first elections are being held as part of the PLO-Israeli accord to establish Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and in towns on the West Bank. About 700 candidates have registered to run for the 87-member autonomy council.

Egyptian government bans female circumcision in hospitals — again

CAIRO (AP) — The government has forbidden state hospitals to perform female circumcisions, just months after authorising them to do so in an attempt to curb botched operations by clumsy amateurs.

State hospitals were quietly told two months ago to stop performing the procedure, but the decision was never publicly announced. A ministry of health official who confirmed the ban attributed the reversal to pressure from women's and human rights groups and fear of U.S. aid sanctions.

Female circumcision, widespread in Egypt and other parts of Africa, is condemned by critics as genital mutilation. The procedure ranges from clipping the tip of a young girl's clitoris to cutting away even the outer sex organs.

Women's and human rights groups were outraged 14 months ago when the government decided to lift a 1959 ban on performing the procedure in state hospitals,

arguing that implied state sanction of genital mutilation.

Hassan Al Kallah, under-secretary of health, said another reason the ban was reintroduced was the fear that U.S. aid for Egyptian health projects could be cut off over the controversy.

But the government says opponents of hospital circumcisions ignore a crucial fact: Unlicensed practitioners do the operation anyway and often bungle it.

Since many doctors refuse to perform the procedure, families take their daughters to midwives or so-called surgical barbers who use anything from dull, dirty razor blades to knives, and often work without anaesthetic.

The result — besides the searing pain of the operation — can be weeks of bleeding, infections, and sometimes death. Women can suffer long-term health problems and have difficulty bearing children.

An estimated 70 per cent to 90 per cent of Egyptian

girls are circumcised just before puberty.

The U.S.-based Cable News Network (CNN) stirred controversy over female circumcision in September 1994, when it aired footage of an amateur cutting away the clitoris of a screaming 10-year-old girl in Cairo.

Thousands of foreign health experts were in the city then for the U.N. population conference, and Egyptian officials quickly promised to outlaw the operation.

They later backpedalled, arguing a ban would not stop so widespread a practice. Instead, in October 1994, the health ministry decreed that government hospitals must set aside one day a week for the operation.

Al Kallah maintained that the decree's opponents failed to realise that in its efforts to halt the practice, the government is up against a deeply rooted tradition.

"People misunderstood us. They thought we were supporting the operation, which

is not true," Mr. Al Kallah said. "We are against it, but we could not change the traditions of the society overnight. We were being attacked by people who did not understand Egyptian culture."

Many Egyptians follow the tradition blindly or think the operation curbs a girl's sexual appetite. Others believe it is ordained by Islam, although Muslim scholars are at odds over this. Some Egyptian Christians follow the practice, too.

When the government overturned the 1959 ban, Health Minister Ali Abdul Fattah argued that allowing circumcision in hospitals would make it safe. He said hospitals also would counsel parents against the practice, warning of its futility and danger.

Eventually, he maintained, the decree and the warnings could eradicate the practice. But Nehad Lotfy, a lawyer with the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights, said that based on comments from

people she has counselled against circumcision, she believed the Egyptian public saw the decree as approving the operation.

"They would say, 'The minister said it is all right. What do you know that the minister doesn't?'" Ms. Lotfy explained.

Mr. Al Kallah said the worst pressure to reverse the decree came from abroad. He cited attacks on Egypt's delegation at September's U.N. Women's Conference in Beijing. Mr. Abdul Fattah also said he was plagued by questions from U.S. officials during a Washington visit.

A New York-based group called Equality Now sent letters urging women's groups worldwide to protest the decree. The idea of using U.S. aid as a weapon against the ruling was raised in Congress.

The U.S. Agency for International Development, which administers the \$2 billion annual aid to Egypt, has long opposed any step that would make circumcision medically acceptable.

Turkish forces kill 10 rebels

TUNCELI, Turkey (R) — Turkish security forces killed 10 rebel Kurdish guerrillas and wounded one on Saturday for the loss of three of their own six wounded in one of the biggest clashes in the east recently, officials said.

They said security forces, backed by Sikorsky assault helicopters and fighter planes, killed 10 members of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in a three-day-long operation in Divrigi and Kangal districts of Sivas province against rebels.

Two members of a crack police team and a soldier were also killed and six other soldiers wounded in the battle.

The officials said the wide-ranging operation was aimed at 150 members of the PKK who had recently fled to Sivas province from the neighbouring Tunceli to escape from the army's year-old crackdown on rebels.

British defence secretary in UAE

DUBAI (AFP) — British Defence Secretary Michael Portillo arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Saturday as London pursued negotiations on a military pact that could help it to promote arms sales to the Gulf nation.

Mr. Portillo, making his first trip here since his appointment in July, met UAE Defence Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktum in Dubai, the British embassy said.

He was due to hold talks Sunday with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan and Army Chief-of-Staff Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahayan.

"It's part of a regular dialogue. We have a close relationship with the Emirates and this is one way of maintaining it," British embassy spokeswoman Heidi Minshall told AFP.

Western diplomats said Mr. Portillo was apparently seeking to push for the con-

clusion of a defence agreement which Britain and the UAE have been negotiating for more than a year.

Asked about this possibility, Mr. Minshall said: "I am sure it will come up during the talks, but it is not the primary goal of the visit."

British officials said last month the agreement could be signed within weeks but they did not give details of its terms.

Military sources said a defence pact would support Britain's attempts to sell weapons to the UAE, which is involved in bolstering its army.

Britain lost out to France in a \$335 million anti-submarine helicopter deal struck with the UAE early this year. But it hopes to win a contract to sell frigates to the Emirates at a cost of more than one billion dollars.

The UAE is already tied to a defence pact with France, its main weapon supplier and trading partner.

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PROGRAMME TWO	
14:00	Shelly Duval's Bedtime Stories
14:30	Feature film: "The Dream Team"
16:00	The Adventures of the Black Stallion
17:00	Sky Trackers
17:00	Children's Programme: "C'est Pas Sorcier"
17:30	Fruits Et Légumes
18:00	Doc. — L'Intégrale
19:00	News in French
19:15	Magazine — Sports Et Musique
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Boogies Diner
20:00	The Book and the Beautiful
21:10	The American Chart Show
22:00	News in English
22:25	Feature film: A Different Affair
23:00	Christmas mass from the Vatican — live
PRAYER TIMES	
05:05	Fajr
06:28	(Sunrise) Duha
11:25	Zuhra
14:19	'Asr
16:41	Maghreb

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR	
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church	Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel.	637285
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	Terrence Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel.	625411
Anglican Church Tel. 652826	Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.	775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	Armenian International Church Tel. 625266
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel.	624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457	The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
It will be sunny in the morning	

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HOSPITALS	
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	623101
Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
EMERGENCIES	
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Fire Brigade	617101
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Public Security Department	661176
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Banana	607
Banana (Mukammal)	800/24
Banana (imported)	100/25
Cabbage	240/25
Carrot	150/25
Cauliflower	150/25
Cucumber	150/25
Cucumbers (large)	200/25
Cucumbers (small)	200/25
Eggplant	150/25
Garlic	750/25
Grape Fruit	220/25
Leek	250/25
Marrow (large)	120/25
Marrow (small)	200/25
Onion (green)	220/25
Onion (dry)	220/25

Court of Cassation upholds Criminal Court rulings to execute three convicts

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation Saturday upheld a ruling by the Criminal Court to execute three men in three separate cases, according to the attorney general at the Criminal Court Ghazi Azar.

In the first case, Othman Abu Lawi, 45, was sentenced to death for raping his niece in May.

According to court papers, the 13-year-old's parents left their daughter with their uncle "to take care of her while they left to the West Bank."

The documents added that during that period the convict raped the girl twice. The child, who was not identified, became pregnant and in the seventh month her family discovered her pregnancy and informed the police.

The second convict Daoud Asmar, 25, was also sentenced to death for sodomising, then killing a

15-year-old boy in a farm in Sahab in May of 1995.

According to court documents, the convict lured the victim, who was not identified, to his father's farm promising him a reward of JD 30.

The documents added that Daoud forcefully sodomised the boy and then threatened him.

In his testimony to police, Daoud said he killed the youth by strangulation to conceal the crime.

He said he took the body and dumped it in the bushes near the farm. The victim's body was discovered days later by a farmer.

The court relied on witnesses who last saw the victim with Daoud, as well as the convict's own confession after he was apprehended by the authorities.

The third case involved a 28-year-old man who was sentenced to death after being convicted of murdering a youth in Baqa'a on Oct. 29, 1994.

According to court documents,

Abdul Karim Da'jeh lured a 17-year-old youth to an empty pool in Al Talbieh Camp in a Baqa'a farm and tried to sodomise him.

In his confession to police, Abdul Karim said that he tried to rape the youth but after he failed he threw him to the ground and the youth fainted, the documents said.

Abdul Karim then used a knife to stab him in the chest and slit his male organ, the document added. The convict buried the murder victim near the pool and then fled.

He was apprehended by authorities two months after the murder was committed, the document said, adding that Abdul Karim confessed and re-enacted the crime.

According to Mr. Azar, the three cases will be referred to the chief attorney general, then the minister of justice, prime minister and finally the King for endorsement of the verdicts.

Man surrenders to police after killing two sisters

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — Two Zarqa women were shot and killed by their brother Friday morning in the latest crime of honour to be reported in the Kingdom this year, official sources said.

The women, identified as Kifaya A., 23 and her sister Nadia, 32, were shot and killed by their brother Mohammad A., 38, who first fled the scene but surrendered to the authorities Saturday morning, according to a police official.

The man confessed to the double murder, the official told the Jordan Times. The official declined to release any details concerning the crime.

A 55-year-old man from the vegetable market in Al Sa'edh street, where the incident occurred, said he heard Kifaya (one of the victims) screaming from the first floor window of her house "my brother killed my sister and he wants to kill me."

He added that he saw Kifaya smash the glass of apartment window and jump out, falling through the awning of a shop below, to the ground.

"Kifaya fell on her head, tried to get up again, but fell back. Then her brother appeared at the window and started shooting at her," the man told the Jordan Times.

Another witness who also was present at the busy vegetable market, said she saw Kifaya's brother from the apartment window pointing his pistol towards his sister and shooting at her.

"The first three bullets missed Kifaya but the fourth and fifth struck her in the head, and that was the last thing I saw before I fainted," the 20-year-old woman, who preferred not to be identified, said.

According to the woman, Kifaya and Nadia had a good reputation in the neighbourhood, while their brother, Mohammad, held a criminal record.

"Nadia was married to a man without the knowledge of her brother, and when he learned about it, he killed both his sisters," the woman said.

Another neighbour told the Jordan Times that Mohammad "might have killed his sisters for inheritance reasons." "Mohammad did not want his sister to inherit money and property" the source said.

"Kifaya died instantly while her sister Nadia died on her way to Yajouz Hospital of gunshot wounds to the head and chest.

Neighbours said the mother of the victims was rushed to Zarqa Government Hospital following the incident suffering from a nervous breakdown.

Police refused to confirm any of the allegations and said they were questioning the brother.

Kifaya and Nadia became the 12th and 13th women reportedly killed in a "crime of honour" in the Kingdom this year.

Police search suspects in connection with killing

Meanwhile, police Saturday were searching for suspects in connection with the murder of an unidentified man, whose body was found Friday in a red suitcase that was left in the south bus terminal near Mamoura Hotel, according to official sources.

An official told the Jordan Times Saturday that the man, apparently in his late 20s, had his throat slit and had also received a blow to the head.

The official said luggage porters in the terminal became suspicious of the red suitcase because it was left alone and called the police.

"At this time, we are still trying to determine the identity of the dead man, and are searching for suspects," the official told the Jordan Times.

'TCC not responsible for telephone disruption'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) said Saturday denied it had anything to do with the failure in telephone contacts with Iraq through the Jordanian international circuit.

TCC Director General Walid Dweik told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the TCC can do little about the disruption, for over two weeks now, in telephone contacts between Iraq and Jordan.

The Associated Press agency earlier quoted Iraqi embassy officials in Amman as saying that the telecommunications department in Baghdad was carrying out repair works on the telephone system which was

damaged in the 1991 Gulf war and that this was causing the current disruption of telephone services.

But other sources said the Iraqi authorities have sharply reduced the availability of international telephone lines, apparently to prevent contacts with opposition groups in exile.

Mr. Dweik said the TCC regretted the service had been disrupted, adding that the corporation will make a public announcement when the telephone contacts with Iraq are restored.

Arafat enters

(Continued from page 1)

the campaign down to less than two weeks, will "allow for new candidates to come forward and for possible appeals to the commission," Mr. Abu Safa explained.

Mr. Arafat has raised the number of self-rule council seats to be contested from 87 to 88, adding an extra seat for Gaza City, the official told AFP.

More than a million

Palestinian voters and 670 candidates have signed up for the polls in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Fifty-one representatives will be elected to the council in the West Bank and 37 in the Gaza Strip.

Voters will also elect the president of an executive council to be chosen by the larger body, with Mr. Arafat expected to easily defeat his only challenger, 72-year-old feminist Samiha Khalil, who

opposes the autonomy deals with Israel.

Ms. Khalil says that if elected, she will work to scrap the Israel-PLO peace agreement she dismisses as a sellout.

Ms. Khalil is aware her's is an uphill battle and that Mr. Arafat will probably win. She says she is using the campaign mainly as a platform for her criticism of Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority and to make Israel see reason.

"I am entering the race to raise my voice," Ms. Khalil

told reporters this week. "I thought maybe Israel would come to its senses and... say enough of taking lands and gobbling them."

Ms. Khalil says her top priority, if elected, is to deal with issues she feels really matter to people, including winning the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners still held by Israel.

"I live among people with their emotions, their sufferings," she says. Born in the village of Anabta in 1923, Ms. Khalil

Water pipeline project to supply tourist facilities, residences in Wadi Mousa area

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation is implementing water and sewage projects in the Wadi Mousa area, which includes Petra, and the towns of Wadi Mousa and Taybet Zaman, as part of ongoing government endeavours to promote tourism in southern Jordan, according to Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat Saturday.

Speaking after signing a contract with ENEX Contracting Corporation for laying a 24.5-kilometre length pipeline in that region, the minister said the pipeline will reach hotels in the Wadi Mousa district, which, until now, have not been supplied with running water.

The minister acknowledged the need for the supply of water services in Wadi Mousa, an area which has been witnessing a tourism boom but added that tourist facilities there were set up speedily in the area without due consideration to water services.

According to Abdul Majid Afaneh, ENEX general manager, who signed the contract with the minis-

ter, the JD 1.75 million project entails laying pipelines to provide hotels with 150 cubic metres of water per hour.

The contracted company will lay the pipeline, which will draw water from two water wells in Ma'an, and will install two pumping stations along the line as well as build a reservoir to store water in the district, according to Mr. Afaneh.

With the contract providing for the completion of the entire project within one year, the company plans to embark on its work in early January 1996.

Speaking to journalists following the signing ceremony at his office, Dr. Irsheidat said the ministry plans to conduct a feasibility study for the installation of a sewage network and a main wastewater treatment plant also for the Wadi Mousa area.

The sewage project, estimated at \$10 million, will be financed through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Dr. Irsheidat referred to the establishment of hotels planned along the east coast



Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat Saturday signs a contract with a local contracting corporation for the installation of a water pipeline to supply the Wadi Mousa region (Petra photo)

of the Dead Sea, and said the Ministry of Water and Irrigation will supply these hotels with the infrastructure of water in accordance to overall government plans for laying out roads, electricity and water networks in the region.

The minister denied there

were disputes between the government and investment companies over the construction of four hotels in the east coast of the Dead Sea.

He said the delay in laying out infrastructure was caused by investors' time-consuming study of the

contracts. Investors of Dead Sea projects have previously complained that the government was not providing sufficient incentives to investors by not providing the infrastructure required to implement tourism projects in the area.

Court dismisses witness in Abu Rishteh case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Defence attorneys of Muslim militant Atta Abu Rishteh, accused of slandering His Majesty King Hussein in a newspaper interview in October, Saturday asked the court to dismiss a witness who was due to testify in the case.

Mr. Abu Rishteh, spokesman of the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir (Liberation party), is also charged with belonging to an illegal organisation. He could face up to three years' imprisonment if indicted.

Abdul Fatah Lafi, one of two attorneys defending Mr. Abu Rishteh, asked the court to dismiss the witness, Abla Diab, who works with the legislative department at the Ministry of Information, because "she was not the witness we requested."

The defence had requested that an expert from the Press and Publications Department at the Ministry of Information testify in the case.

"This witness is not the one we wanted and she is an employee at the legislative department and her job is not related to censorship," Mr. Lafi told the tribunal.

Munjid Namarat, reporter of Al Hiwar newspaper who interviewed Mr. Abu Rishteh also failed to show up at court.

Presiding Judge Hafez Amin agreed to dismiss the witness and to call in a new witness. He set Jan. 4 to continue hearing the case.

Date set for Bay'at Al Imam case

The State Court also set Jan. 2 to start hearing the case of 13 people known as Bay'at Al Imam (pledge of allegiance) accused of sabotage after their trial was postponed indefinitely in October because some of the defendants refused to

appoint attorneys at the State Security Court.

The defendants, who were expelled twice from court for disrupting the session, charged that some of the attorneys were atheists, and that they did not believe in the court's justice system. They said they would defend themselves or God would decide their fate.

They are charged with slander against King Hussein and illegal possession and manufacturing of explosive materials.

The Jordan Bar Association (JBA) recently appointed seven attorneys to represent the defendants after the court asked the association to do so.

Court sets Jan. 3 to hear CID attack case

A new date, Jan. 3, was also set by the State Security Court to start hearing the case of six people accused of attacking the office of the Central Intelligence Department (CID) at Baqa'a refugee camp on Dec. 26, 1994.

On Dec. 26, five of the defendants allegedly went to Baqa'a camp and showered the CID building with bullets from a machine gun, injuring one person then fled the scene.

The sixth defendant was apprehended by the authorities three days before the incident occurred.

According to the State Prosecutor General's charge sheet, the defendants are charged with the assault and the intent to block the appropriate authorities (CID) from exercising its duties in accordance with the Constitution and the distribution of pamphlets slandering the King.

The charge sheet said that the suspects started their illegal activities in April of 1994 and plotted to carry extremist attacks on tourist and security departments in the Kingdom.

Municipality to construct tunnel in accident-prone district

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman Municipality Saturday started digging a 34-metre-long tunnel in an eastern Amman district where dangerous road-crossing and traffic conditions have led to the death or injury of several school children.

The road, under which the tunnel will be constructed, runs between a densely populated area and schools.

The construction of the tunnel and its eventual use will hopefully put an end to the carnage on the roads, Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi said.

The five-metre wide and

31 metre-high JD 64,000 tunnel, which will take two weeks to complete, will be constructed at the ring road which passes through the urban development region where two housing estates have been built for limited income groups, according to a municipality engineer at the site.

The mayor said numerous students have been killed or injured by speeding vehicles on that particular road in the past few years.

At least 2,030 students and residents of the district will use the tunnel on a daily basis, according to Dr. Abbadi.

The mayor pointed out that the Amman area is in need of many other tunnels to be constructed at points considered dangerous to pedestrians.

According to the mayor, municipality teams in the next few days, will start digging another tunnel in front of the Specialty Hospital not far from the Sports Stadium in Amman.

The municipality has already constructed five tunnels in the Greater Amman area, two of them within the vicinity of the University of Jordan.

WHAT'S GOING ON

SALE
"Gifts and crafts by Suha Laila Kassissieh at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra Street (until Dec. 31).

EXHIBITIONS
• Works by artist Hind Nasser at Darat Al Funun (until Jan. 6).
• Photography by poet Ibrahim Nasrallah entitled "The Autobiography of an Eye" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. (Until Jan. 4).



WINTERTIME WASHING: A family of tent dwellers takes advantage of Amman's sunny days to dry their washing over a picturesque view of the other world (Photo by Yousef Al'Allan)

Strike-weary Bangladesh faces more disruption

DHAKA (AFP) — Thousands of strike-hardened commuters struggled to work in the Bangladesh capital Saturday as the opposition's last attempt in 1995 to topple Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government got under way.

As they did so, the military revealed they had detained at least 5,000 people they termed "terrorists and criminals" in a nationwide clampdown ahead of general elections scheduled for Feb. 7.

Defence sources said a total of 8,000 home-made bombs and explosives and 500 guns had been seized.

Security was tightened throughout the country for Saturday's national blockade of road, rail and water-

ways aimed at forcing Ms. Zia to agree to put a neutral caretaker administration in place ahead of the elections.

There were no immediate reports of clashes.

But a spokesman for the state-run Bangladesh Railway said three passengers were injured when an engine and three carriages were derailed on Tongi District, on the northern outskirts of Dhaka. "We suspect sabotage," said the spokesman.

Elsewhere train services were halted as "mobs obstructed tracks," rail officials said.

Pickets were also out to prevent buses and vehicles circulating in the capital.

Meanwhile a dissident member of Ms. Zia's ruling

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) urged the prime minister to accept opposition demands in the interests of preserving democracy.

Nurul Islam Moni said in a statement issued Saturday that the whole country was being pushed towards disaster, "the economy is shattered and democracy is doomed." "A little more sincerity" from Zia and her main political rival Sheikh Hasina Wajed could overcome the political crisis, he said, pointing out that differences between the two women had narrowed.

Newspaper reports said Ms. Zia's party was considering an opposition proposal to appoint a council of advisors under President

Abdur Rahman Biswas to oversee the upcoming poll.

So far she has rejected their demands for a neutral administration as unconstitutional.

Mr. Biswas told the official BSS news agency that he would exercise his constitutional powers if necessary. Although a member of the BNP he pointed out that as president he no longer belonged to any party and was neutral.

Ms. Hasina Wajed's opposition Awami League has enforced 26 general strikes this year in a bid to bring down Ms. Zia's government. It has called another 48-hour general strike from January 3.

Seoul may send more rice to N. Korea — minister

SEOUL (R) — South Korea may consider offering further rice aid to Pyongyang if it was limited to feeding civilians, media reports quoted Foreign Minister Gong Ro-myung as saying Saturday.

"The government may offer rice aid to the North if it could be assured the rice would not be used for military purposes and that accurate investigations are allowed to be made of the food situation there," Yonhap news agency quoted him as saying.

As recently as Wednesday, a day after the North returned five captured South Korean seamen, Seoul ruled out further rice aid to Pyongyang and said the issue depended on the North's willingness to change its belligerent attitude towards Seoul.

"The issue of rice aid all depends on North Korea. The return of the Woosung crew should not be seen as a change in North Korea's basic attitude," the deputy unification minister, Song Young-Dae, said.

Pyongyang has kept the world guessing in recent weeks by mixing conciliatory gestures with an alleged military build-up on the border it shares with the South.

Tuesday, Pyongyang released five surviving crew members of the fishing trawler Woosung, plus the remains of three of their colleagues. The boat was seized in May after straying into northern waters.

But North Korean troops are alleged to have staged military manoeuvres near the demilitarised zone separating North from South. The two nations have been techni-

cally at war since the 1950-53 Korean war. Flood damage this year has depleted already deteriorating food supplies in the North, and led to an unprecedented appeal for help by the reclusive nation.

United Nations food agencies say nearly 2.1 million children in the North risked starvation.

Mr. Gong said the North was 1.2 million tonnes to three million tonnes short of its grain requirement, local media reported.

He was quoted as saying the amount was too large for a single nation to supply on its own.

As the North normally did not like accepting aid purely from Seoul, a consortium of donor nations including South Korea would be a good solution, local media quoted him as saying.

The government also planned to discuss rice aid at a meeting of officials from South Korea, the United States and Japan on Jan. 24-25 in Hawaii, Mr. Gong said.

South Korea shipped 150,000 tonnes of rice to the North this year but halted the programme in October after Pyongyang rebuffed repeated requests to release the Woosung and its crew.

The Korean National Red Cross said it would send an emergency relief shipment of household necessities next month to North Korea. It has already sent two shipments this year, including blankets and other relief goods.

Heavy blow for Major as Tory MP defects

LONDON (AFP) — An MP from the ruling Conservative Party said she was defecting to the opposition Friday, in a shock move which reduced the majority of Prime Minister John Major's government to just three, and increased the likelihood of an early election.

Accusing the government of "indecision and weak leadership on Europe," Emma Nicholson announced that she was leaving the party and joining the centrist Liberal Democratic Party.

Ms. Nicholson said she could "no longer remain silent when I see Britain's future endangered by the government's indecision and weak leadership on Europe, and Britain's people neglected by a government which does not care."

Her defection will fuel speculation that a general election will be held next year, although the prime minister may try to carry on until the latest possible date of late spring 1997.

It was the second high-profile defection to hit Mr. Major in three months. In early October, Alan Howarth dropped a bombshell during the run-up to the party's annual conference by announcing that he was defecting to the Labour Party, the first Tory MP ever to do so.

Mr. Howarth said at the time that between 30 and 40 other Tory MPs broadly shared his view of the government.

Ms. Nicholson's defection came a day after Conservative Party Chairman Brian Mawhinney told rank-and-file Tories to be prepared for general elections, adding that they could be called next year.

Speaking on British Television, Mr. Mawhinney told local Conservative organisations "to put your association on election alert now."

Ms. Nicholson's defection immediately reduces Mr. Major's commons majority to three, and as a former vice-chairman of the Tory Party her loss will be an unexpected and damaging blow to the government.

She said that she did not propose to run in the next general election, but hoped to pursue a political career as a Liberal Democrat candidate for European Parliamentary elections.

Ms. Nicholson has been MP for west London since 1987.



Italian Prime Minister Lamberto Dini confirms at a press conference that he hands in his resignation to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro (AFP photo)

Dini offers resignation, Italy looks to reform

ROME (R) — Prime Minister Lamberto Dini tendered his resignation Saturday, confronting Italy's rival political forces with a choice between a swift general election or working together to give the country the stability it lacks.

Mr. Dini, a former central banker who has headed an unelected government of technocrats since January, held a brief meeting of his 11-month-old cabinet to advise ministers of his decision, an official statement said.

He then went to the Quirinale presidential palace to submit his resignation offer to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

Mr. Scalfaro, the supreme arbiter in Italian politics, has already signalled that he will reserve judgment on the offer and instead send Mr. Dini to parliament for a debate early in January on the country's political future.

The parliament was elected in March 1994 following the disgrace of Italy's old governing class in the country's corruption scandals, but it is so severely splintered that it is incapable of sustaining a political party government.

Mr. Dini, who heads Italy's 54th government since World War II, was

brought in to the breach after media magnate Silvio Berlusconi's conservative coalition government fell apart just seven months into office.

His long-awaited resignation clears the decks for a decision by parliament on whether to move to an early election, some time in the first half of 1996, or pull together in a cross-party government with two years to revise the constitution.

Mr. Dini remains a prime candidate to head whatever government emerges.

The main centre-right and centre-left blocs are far apart on the type of electoral and institutional reforms that will be needed to give Italy a system of durable, efficient government.

But Mr. Berlusconi, leader of the centre-right Freedom Alliance, and his main rival, leftist leader Massimo d'Alema, both pledged Saturday to try to strike a deal.

Mr. Berlusconi, who has softened his strident calls for a snap election at all costs, told La Stampa newspaper Italy needed a political and social race to modernise its workings and ensure it was in shape to join a single European currency in 1999.

He called for a "transpar-

ent and open alliance between opposites who for once lay down their arms and set aside partisan interests to work for the good of the country."

"When a business is in trouble the first thing you do is reestablish agreement among its shareholders," the billionaire tycoon said.

Mr. d'Alema, whose ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) is the biggest force in the centre-left "Olive Tree" coalition which has supported Mr. Dini in parliament, said the PDS would not reject Mr. Berlusconi's initiative out of hand.

"We want to explore seriously whether there is room for an agreement. We have already lost 18 months on the path to reforms," he told the PDS newspaper L'Unita, warning that the alternative was a "quagmire".

The PDS Friday proposed giving Mr. Dini a mandate to govern for a further six months until the end of Italy's European Union presidency next June.

It said the rival blocs should use the first 60 days to explore whether room existed for an agreement on a cross-party government of reforms, with an election in June if they fail.

Jack and Jessica — 1995's favourite British names

LONDON (AFP) — Jack and Jessica were the most popular names for British babies born in 1995, according to a report published here Thursday. Both names rose from 1994 to claim spots in the boys' and girls' lists as last year's favourites Thomas and Rebecca slipped back to third, according to the report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. This year has also seen a surge of support for Shannon as a name for girls, rising 22 places to 11th, and three names made the top 50 for the first time — Ellie, Abbie and Kayleigh. Daniel was the second most popular boy's name while James slipped from second to fourth. Among the girls, Lauren remained in second place, with Sophie fourth, followed by Charlotte and Hannah. Currently out of favour are boys' names Andrew and Jonathan — they both dropped seven places to 27th and 36th respectively — while Anna, Louise, Richard, Stephen and Mark have all fallen out of the top 50. Up-and-coming names in the lists include Cameron, in 46th place, Reece (48) and Charlie (49). These names did not even feature in the top 100 lists ten years ago.

Clubs forced to provide water to prevent drug deaths

LONDON (AFP) — A London local authority announced new rules to force nightclubs to provide free water in an attempt to reduce deaths from the drug "ecstasy." Camden Council in north London introduced the new measure — under which "rave" clubs face fines of up to 2,000 pounds (\$3,000) if they do not comply — in the wake of the death of Leah Betts, who died after taking the drug at her 18th birthday party last month. Her death provoked a national debate on the dangers of ecstasy after the girl's parents appealed publicly to young people to learn from their daughter's fate. A Camden spokesman said Friday the move "does not legitimise ecstasy. We are not condoning taking illegal substances. We insist on fire escapes, but we don't condone arsonists." Dehydration has been one of the factors in many of the 50 deaths that have occurred in Britain from taking the drug.

MP held then freed after giving out hashish in the street

ROME (AFP) — A radical Italian member of parliament, Marco Pannella, who is pressing for the legalisation of soft drugs, was arrested Friday after handing out hashish in the centre of Rome. He was freed after questioning by police but is liable for prosecution. Mr. Pannella announced some days ago that he would court imprisonment to further his cause. Thursday he gave 200 grammes of hashish to an announcer of the state-owned Rai-Due television channel during a live broadcast. "A deputy caught in the act must be arrested. I threw eight doses and three packets of hashish to whoever wanted them and I must be tried for that," Mr. Pannella told newsmen Friday in the Piazza Navona here. The distribution and sale of drugs, either hard or soft, is punishable by prison in Italy. Mr. Pannella was arrested earlier this year after a similar incident in Rome. His party is currently collecting signatures for a referendum on the legalising of soft drugs.

Cousteau joins Keating Commission to ban the bomb

SYDNEY (AFP) — Renowned French ecologist and explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau has joined the Australian government sponsored commission to ban nuclear weapons in a public relations coup for Prime Minister Paul Keating.

Chinese diplomat Qian Jiadong, a former ambassador for disarmament, has also agreed to serve on the commission, launched by Mr. Keating last month to work out proposals to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The appointments, announced by Mr. Keating late Friday, came 24 hours after France conducted the fifth in its current series of nuclear tests in the South Pacific, flouting world opinion and drawing another wave of condemnation.

Mr. Cousteau is the second French international celebrity to join the Keating

Commission after former Prime Minister Michel Rocard accepted the appointment last month.

Other members include former U.S. Defence Secretary Robert McNamara, and the winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize Joseph Rotblat.

However, France has said the deliberations of the commission are unlikely to influence French policy or actions.

The latest appointments take to 17 the membership of the commission, which will meet for the first time next month.

Mr. Keating said the commission should be large enough to encompass a range of specialisations needed for its task but not so large as to be unwieldy.

Mr. Cousteau, he said, had a unique international reputation for his work on environmental issues, notably in marine conservation, and a

strong personal commitment to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

"With these two most welcome additions I am confident that the commission is appropriately structured to carry out its mandate," Mr. Keating said in a statement.

The commission will meet in Canberra from January 23 to 25 and has been asked to report by August next year.

Australia's ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Butler, who will head the commission, said this month that it would target rogue states and terrorist groups in its campaign for a global ban on nuclear weapons.

Among its major objectives will be new international legislation halting the production of weapons grade fissile material. Mr. Butler said.

Final results released for Russian parliamentary elections

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's central electoral commission Friday released final official results for the proportional representation vote in the Dec. 17 parliamentary elections won by the Communist party by a huge margin.

The results came after a final check of all the ballot papers by the commission. In the proportional representation share of the vote, which filled half of the 450 seats in the state Duma or lower house, the Communist Party came first with 22.3 per cent.

The ultra-nationalist liberal Democratic Party

(LDPR) came second with 11.18 per cent, followed by the government party Our Home Is Russia with 10.13 per cent and the liberal Yabloko Party with 6.89 per cent.

None other of the 43 parties that competed in the Dec. 17 vote to the state Duma crossed the five per cent minimum barrier to be eligible for seats allocated under the proportional system.

The closest to the five-per cent threshold were: Women of Russia (4.61 per cent), the hard left Communists-Working Russia-for the Soviet Union

(4.53 per cent) and the Nationalist Congress of Russian Communities (4.31 per cent).

The commission said that 69.2 million people voted, out of 107.5 million registered voters. However 1.32 million ballots were declared invalid.

In the single-mandate constituency voting, which fills the other 225 seats, the Communist Party was also well ahead, having won 58 seats, followed by the leftist Agrarian Party with 20, Yabloko with 14 and Our Home Is Russia with 10.

Philippines captures nine alleged extremists

Manila (R) — Philippine police have arrested nine foreigners holding Iraqi, Sudanese and Saudi Arabian passports who are alleged to be linked to a worldwide movement calling for "a global jihad" (holy war), officials said Saturday.

An extensive variety of explosive devices and weapons seized from the nine indicated they planned to carry out bombing campaigns, officials said.

One of those arrested in police raids Friday was identified as Adel Annon, who officials said is believed to be a brother of Ramzi Ahmed Yousef.

Mr. Yousef is on trial in the United States as an alleged mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York.

"He is known to be or reportedly a brother of Ramzi Yousef," interior Secretary Rafael Alunan told a news conference. Mr. Annon holds an Iraqi passport, he said.

The arrests came more than a week after seven other foreigners with Pakistani passports were captured near Manila allegedly involved in a plot to launch attacks in the Philippines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

Police said the nine were captured in raids on two Manila apartment buildings. Police sources said several others were arrested in Friday's operations but this could not be immediately confirmed.

"According to our initial analysis, they are with a global movement calling for a global jihad to promote the establishment of an Islamic empire," Mr. Alunan said in a Manila radio interview. Police said they seized weaponry including plastic explosives, blasting caps, a TNT bomb, time fuses, detonating cords and a pistol, along with passports, birth certificates and maps of Manila.



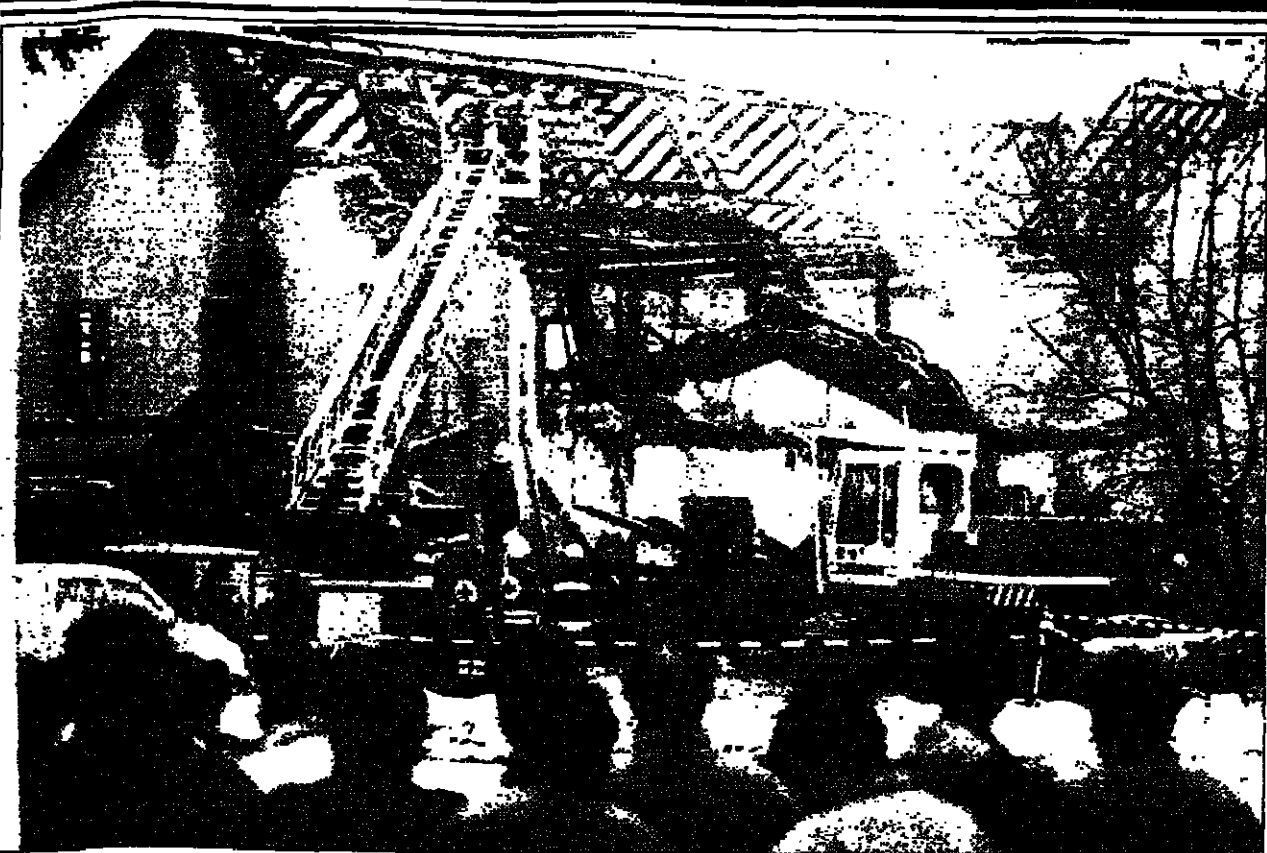
Adel Annon, suspected member of an international terrorist ring, is escorted by Philippine police (AFP photo)

Saleh Al Quwaye and Zaid Al Amer with Saudi Arabian passports. They will be charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives, police said. The same charges were filed against the seven arrested earlier this month.

Officials said it was not yet clear whether the nine had links to the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf based in the southern Philippines which has threatened to launch a campaign of bombings and assassinations in the country.

"This will come out in the interrogations," police spokesman Arturo Lumibao said. A leader of Abu Sayyaf earlier told a private Philippine television station that his group had received two shipments of arms and had three groups around Manila ready to strike.

Philippine officials say Abu Sayyaf gets arms and training from abroad.



Rescue workers and firemen inspect the remains of a burnt out house of a Turkish family in Schopfheim (AFP photo)

4 dead as fire destroys Turkish home

SCHOPFHEIM, Germany (AFP) — Four members of a Turkish family died and five others were seriously injured Friday when fire swept through their home in this southwestern town, police said.

Firefighters took three hours to extinguish the fierce blaze after a neighbour sounded the alert at 5:30 a.m. Police said the cause of Friday's fire remained unclear, but Turks have been the target of racially-motivated arson attacks in recent years.

Rescuers discovered the body of a 38-year-old woman, her nine-year-old son and his 58-year-old grandmother.

Later another body was pulled from the ruins, believed to be that of a 15-year-old boy.

A 19-year-old, the most severely burnt, was rushed to a specialist hospital in Zurich for treatment.

Firemen said they believed the fire had broken out near a wood stove, and police said they had no evidence as yet to suggest foul play.

In addition to the family flat, the building housed the office of a Turkish association and a car repair workshop.

Germany has been badly shaken by a wave of racially-motivated arson attacks, notably the November 1992 incident at Moelln, in which three Turkish people died, and a May 1993 fire in which five Turks perished in Solingen.

A spate of arson attacks against Turkish interests in recent months has been blamed by police on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the outlawed separatist organisation.

Yeltsin pledges no U-turn over reforms on return to Kremlin

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin vowed to press ahead with his reform process Friday as he returned to his office in the Kremlin for the first time in two months following heart trouble.

"We will not allow anyone to force us into an about-turn," he pledged as he walked through the Kremlin grounds, just 11 days after watching the Communists notch up big wins in legislative elections.

"The Russians have had enough of experiments. Russia is now in a situation where, if you push it back, there could be disaster," he added, quoted by the Interfax news agency.

His comments echoed similar statements after the Communists emerged as the country's strongest party in elections to the state Duma, the lower house of parliament, on Dec. 17.

They topped the proportional representation share of the vote, which fills half of the Duma's 450 seats, with 22.31 per cent, well ahead of their closest rivals, the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party on 11.06 per cent.

It gave them 100 seats in the Duma, to which they added a further 58 by also topping the poll in single-mandate constituency voting for the other 225 seats.

Pro-reformist and government parties did poorly, with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia winning only 9.89 per cent in the proportional vote and 44 seats in the single-mandate vote.

Mr. Yeltsin, 64, also took time during his walk through the Kremlin grounds to praise the "economic stabilisation" of Russia.

"Growth in industrial production has reached two per cent. We are getting out of the crisis," he said.

The decline in industrial production has slowed down sharply this year, but government estimates predict it will still reach three per cent.

The president also pledged not to work 18 hours a day any more.

"I must not tire myself out," Mr. Yeltsin was hospitalised on Oct. 26 with a myocardial ischaemia, reducing the flow of blood to his heart. He left hospital a month later to recuperate in a sanatorium in the Moscow suburbs.

In recent television appearances he appeared well-rested, perky and slimmer, confounding earlier predictions his political future was over after his second hospitalisation for heart trouble in four months.

The president's health problems risked seriously undermining his political authority this year.

From "chills" to heart attacks in July and October, from extended holidays to spells in hospital, Mr. Yeltsin spent more than half of the year either resting or having treatment.

When in October he was hospitalised for the second time, analysts said his political future was probably over and it was time to name a successor.

However he is almost sure of running in June's presidential elections, barring further health problems, to stem the rise of Communist forces because he remains the reformists' best hope for staying in power.

During his months of enforced rest, Mr. Yeltsin made sure he held onto the key powers of defence, interior, security and foreign policy, including control of the nuclear button.

But in the coming six months he will need to show much dynamism and press a lot of flesh to overcome public disaffection with reforms and widening poverty which fed the Communists' electoral success.

At present, less than three per cent of the Russian population say they have confidence in him.

Former S. Korean president's health improves after ending hunger strike

SEOUL (AFP) — Jailed former President Chun Doo-hwan, who fell unconscious Friday on the 27th day of a hunger strike, has stopped fasting and his health is improving, a senior doctor said.

"Everything is OK with him and Mr. Chun will be able to take thin rice gruel from Saturday evening and beef soup beginning Sunday," Doctor Lee Kwon-jon of Seoul Police Hospital told Yonhap news agency.

Dr. Lee said Mr. Chun had eaten a little rice soup that had been brought from his home Friday evening and had even joked about his hunger strike.

"Well now that my fast is over, I think all of those who care about my health will be able to have a happy new year's holiday," Dr. Lee quoted the 64-year-old former head of state as saying.

However Dr. Lee did not predict when Mr. Chun might be well enough to return to Anyang Prison from the hospital where he was rushed last week after losing 10 kilograms.

Doctors put the ex-president on oxygen and an intravenous drip Friday when he slipped into unconsciousness, weak, dehydrated and emaciated from the fast and a severe bout of diarrhoea.

The former general-turned-president started the hunger strike when he was jailed on Dec. 3 on mutiny charges related to a 1979 coup. He launched the fast to protest his innocence of the charges.

Prosecutors are also set to charge him with accumulating a massive slush fund while in office from 1980 to 1988, and Saturday said they had discovered \$133 million of the black money in an account opened at the Korea Investment Trust Co.

The account, in the name of the presidential security service, had been opened in October of 1983 and was closed when the scandal over a slush fund raised by Roh Tae-woo, erupted in October.

Mr. Roh, who succeeded Mr. Chun as president in 1988 and was Mr. Chun's coup colleague, is also in jail, charged with raising some \$650 million in slush money from businessmen and with assisting Mr. Chun in the 1979 coup.

Mr. Chun's lawyer, Lee Yang-woo, said in a formal statement later Saturday that Mr. Chun had ended his hunger strike "on the cordial advice of his family and doctors" as his health had deteriorated "to the extreme."

The statement said that through his fast the former head of state had expressed his determination to defend the legitimacy of the fifth republic, as the era of his presidency is known in South Korea.

Sri Lanka rebels ready for talks if army leaves Jaffna

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger guerrillas said Saturday they were ready to resume peace talks with the government if the army left their captured stronghold in the northern town of Jaffna.

The offer came as a rebel suicide bomber blew himself up in the eastern Batticaloa district Saturday morning, wounding an army officer and badly damaging the vehicle he was travelling in.

The rebel Voice of Tigers Radio said the offer by Tiger guerrilla chief Velupillai Prabhakaran was made in a statement read by rebel spokesman Anton Balasingham at a news conference in the north Friday.

The radio, monitored by Reuters in the northern town of Vavuniya, said the rebels would only resume talks in the presence of foreign mediators.

The offer was similar to one made by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam earlier insisting peace talks could be resumed only after the army left Jaffna town and other areas in the rebels' Jaffna Peninsula stronghold captured in early December.

The Tigers unilaterally broke off a three-month truce and withdrew from peace talks in April.

In Batticaloa, a civilian bystander was badly wounded in the bomb attack by the Tiger suicide bomber near the Kallady bridge, a military spokesman said.

"Parts of the suicide bomber's body were strewn all over the place," the spokesman said.

Military officials said the rebels, fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the north and east of the majority Sinhalese island, are trying to destabilise Batticaloa.

The rebels shifted a large number of their fighters there after the fall of Jaffna in early December.

Voice of Tigers Radio quoted Mr. Prabhakaran as saying the mass exodus from Jaffna before its capture by the army showed that the people fully supported the rebels.

The government says more than 50,000 people have died in the 12-year war.

Western aid workers and military officials have said the rebels forced residents to leave Jaffna before the army marched in.

Some 200,000 refugees are now in the northern Vanni mainland, south of Jaffna Peninsula, caught in a tug-of-war between the government, which wants them to return to Jaffna, and the rebels who want them to stay put.

In northwestern Mannar, an eight-year-old girl was killed in an airstrike on rebel positions at Periyapandivirichchan Friday, residents wounded in the attack said Saturday.

Eight people badly wounded in the attack by two Hind Mi-24 helicopter gunships were brought to the Vavuniya hospital.

The military spokesman said he had no information on the airstrike.

Record number of executions in U.S. in 1995

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A record 56 prisoners were executed in 24 U.S. states in 1995 — a number that could increase next year, an anti-death penalty group said Friday.

Since U.S. states were restored the right to choose whether to implement the death penalty back in 1976, more than 300 prisoners have been put to death nationwide, 104 of them in Texas alone, according to the Washington-based National Coalition for Abolition of the Death Penalty.

Fully 38 states have opted to reinstate the death penalty, including New York just this year.

According to recent data, more than 3,000 convicts are awaiting execution on death row.

Southern states are those which have executed the most: 36 people were put to death for their crimes in Florida, 29 in Virginia, 22 in Louisiana, and 20 in Georgia since they restored capital punishment.

Last year, 31 people were executed across the country, down from 38 in 1993.

"We are heading towards 100 executions a year," said Steve Hawkins, director of the coalition.

Pakistani strike causes widespread shutdowns

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Life was widely disrupted in Pakistan Saturday in a general strike called by a multi-party religious front which accuses Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of undermining the country's Islamic identity.

Reports from major cities said commercial activity was largely halted with little traffic on roads, amid a heavy police turnout to prevent trouble.

Up to midday no major incidents were reported. Leaders of the Milli Yekhehah Council (MYC), which sponsored the protest, said their strike call had received a good response throughout the country.

A nearly complete shutdown of markets was reported in southern Karachi, the country's largest city, and long plagued by political violence that has cost more than 1,800 lives this year.

Karachi roads were almost empty, with good strike-backing from the city's influential ethnic group, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), representing Urdu-speaking settlers.

In Lahore, capital of Pakistan's wealthiest and most populous Punjab province, police baton charged to disperse a small crowd burning tires in the streets, witnesses said.

At least three religious activists were slightly injured in a clash with police in Sheikhupura, a Punjab town, witnesses said.

A partial business shutdown was also reported in the north west frontier province, where MYC members marched in the provincial capital, Peshawar, ahead of a planned public meeting in the city centre.

However reports said transport was operating normally in Peshawar.

"The masses are fed up with the government," said 70-year old MYC chief, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani.

"We believe in peace. This is a peaceful strike and that is why it is a successful strike," Mr. Noorani said in a statement. "It is proof that people want to show their Islamic identity."

"The prime minister who says deeni madrasas (religious schools) are training centres for terrorists has been proved wrong," the MYC leader said.

He said the government was "undermining the Islamic identity" of Pakistan and waging a campaign against religious institutions and clerics. "We have united to safeguard the country's Islamic ideology," he added.

Mr. Noorani also accused the government of toadying to the anti-United States and the West, saying "The people of Pakistan are opposed to the new world order being imposed by the U.S."

Ms. Bhutto's arch political foe, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who heads the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League, has also supported the MYC.

An official spokesman, quoted by The News daily, said the people had complete confidence in Ms. Bhutto's leadership.

Police formally identify body

LONDON (AFP) — Police said Friday they had formally identified a body found earlier in the day as that of missing French student Celine Figard.

Figard's naked body was discovered by a motorist in woods near a motorway rest area in western central England, 120 kilometres from a gas station near Newbury, southern England, where the 19-year-old accountancy student was last seen on Dec. 19 climbing into a white Mercedes truck.

She was formally identified by her 24-year-old cousin Jean-Marc Figard, who had travelled from the Ashburn Hotel at Fordingbridge, southern England, where he works as head waiter.

Figard had been on her way to spend Christmas with her brother when she disappeared.

The cause of death has not been released.



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Action vs rhetoric

FIVE LONG years have elapsed since the disastrous Gulf crisis and war divided the Arab World, eliminated Iraq as an important regional player and put the Iraqi people on a merciless track of agony and suffering. Many things have changed since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. But the suffering of the Iraqi people persists, with no signs of concern from their leadership or an effective mechanism for help from the other Arab countries.

Jordan has now stepped in to put an end to the empty rhetoric which has characterised the Arab response to the pleas of help emanating from Iraq by proposing a plan of action that can help lift the plight of the Iraqi people.

The plan may or may not work. But the fact that Jordan has articulated it means that someone is at least serious about the need to save Iraq and its people. Compared to the rhetoric others have made about Iraq, the Jordanian proposal is centred around a plan of action whose mechanism is clear, objectives noble. Jordan says that the only way to help the Iraqis and save their country from a bloodbath is to encourage them to get together to articulate a policy of national reconciliation. Jordan insists that the role of all outsiders, including itself, is restricted to facilitating a meeting and providing the participants with the help that they might need in order to get going. Above all, the Kingdom unequivocally states that the objective of the gathering should be to maintain the territorial integrity of the country, to create a pluralistic system under which the rights of all Iraqis can be respected and to rehabilitate Iraq to play its legitimate role as a member of the region and the international community.

No one who is genuinely concerned about the fate of Iraqis can object to such a proposal, for it embodies all the goals that the Iraqis and the Arabs, at least publicly, envisage for a post-Gulf war Iraq.

Against this backdrop, those who want to help the Iraqis should either support the Jordanian proposal or come up with a more workable and viable alternative. Otherwise, there will be one explanation for their objections: It is not the well-being of Iraq that they seek, it is the serving of their limited and personal interests which they want to achieve at the expense of Iraq and its people.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE FEELING of optimism which marked the atmosphere surrounding the Israeli-Syrian negotiations in Washington did not result from the death of the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, nor did it come as a sudden inspiration of Syrian President Hafez Assad, said a writer in Al Ra'i daily. Most probably, this optimism came about in the light of progress achieved through negotiations going on behind the scenes and outside the framework of the public meetings between the two sides, according to Tareq Masarweh. It seems that Damascus and Tel Aviv are now in agreement on what has been described as "regional peace," which, among other things, provides for Israel's recognition of Syria's interests and privileges in Lebanon, said the writer. Therefore, one can conclude that Syria's earlier display of dissatisfaction with Jordan's attitude and its peace treaty with Israel or the Palestinians' conclusion of the Oslo deals with the Jewish state was tactical, and because they have not waited for Damascus to achieve its own peace with Tel Aviv, said the writer. There is no doubt now, added the writer, that with the achievement of a Syrian-Israeli peace, which is drawing closer everyday, Lebanon will be transformed into a "self-rule area."

FAKHRI KAWAR, a writer in Al Dastour, said the public is dissatisfied with the government's attitude vis-a-vis the coffee question. As an executive authority, the government has the power to end the monopoly of coffee merchants and bring down the exorbitant prices imposed by a handful of whole sale merchants on the Jordanian people by allowing other merchants to import the coffee, said the writer. He said it was not enough for the government departments not to serve coffee in their canteens, because this is a very limited action that does not have an effective result. The government can force the coffee merchants to lower the prices, and can at the same time help the Jordanian Consumer Protection Society's campaigns, he added. On the other hand, said the writer, supporting the society's endeavours is a national duty; and should this society succeed in bringing down the coffee prices, the road will be paved for it to serve the public through other campaigns in other matters of national interest.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

Subsidies — a crime against the future

IT IS NOW taken for granted that financial subsidies make a bad policy which, sooner or later, leads to destruction. A subsidy would start by an irresponsible official yielding to pressure and making a decision. Subsidies grow like a snowball and finally expose the very security of the country to high risk. This is similar to a sick man buying time in order for the ailment to deteriorate beyond remedy. France and America gave very relevant examples.

France witnessed recently an extended strike which paralysed public life for several weeks. The reason is that at some time a socialist government decided to increase the entitlements and other claims against the welfare system and social security beyond the limits dictated by the proper economic formulas. The beneficiaries of such irresponsible action rejoiced and reelected the same government for a second term, because it allowed them to enjoy a standard of living exceeding their rights, causing huge losses to the welfare system in the process.

Finally came the moment of truth. The French welfare system is bankrupt. It is unable to meet its financial commitments and repay its huge debts guaranteed by the government. There is no alternative but to face the problem through a radical restructuring overhaul whereby outlays would be curtailed and subscription premiums increased so that a balance may be restored.

Predictably, the millions of beneficiaries rebelled. They only cared for their entitlements and their good life-styles and standards of living. They took to the streets to force the government to back up and to leave things as they are. What counts is that they should pay less, take more, live happily today and let France and its economy go to hell.

In the United States, government offices were shutdown

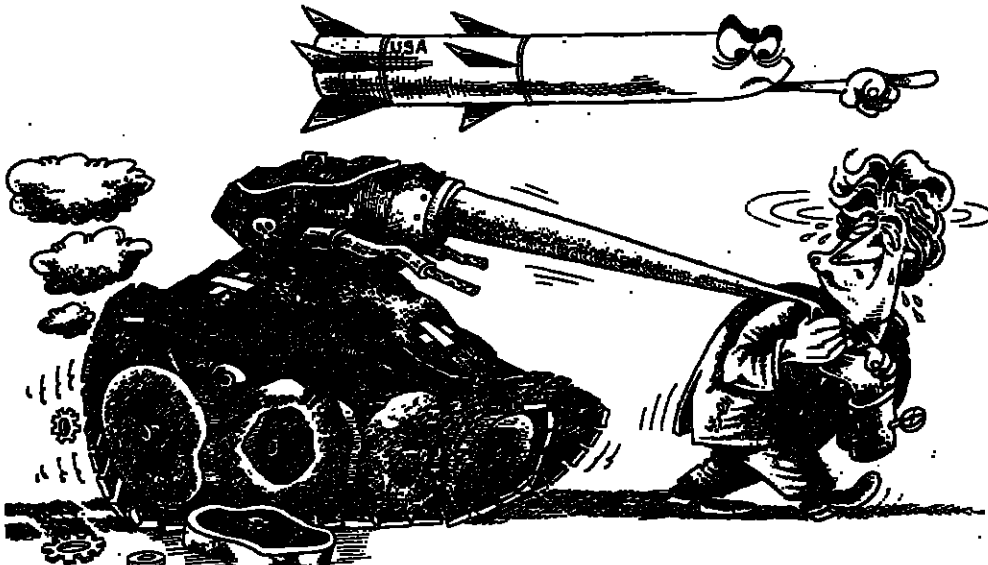
due to lack of funds, because the budget was not agreed upon between the Congress and the president. The Republican Congress insisted on introducing gradual reductions of social expenditure of the budget over seven years in order to balance the budget by 2002, otherwise the treasury will be bankrupt, the dollar will lose value, and prices will break the roof and rise to the sky. However, the Democratic president was not in a position to infuriate the millions of beneficiaries in an election year. Likewise, he cannot raise taxes to cover the deficit, so he revert to his presidential power of veto. Beneficiaries applauded. For them what counts is their entitlements. They want to live today and let America and its budget go to hell.

When a government makes a financial commitment and graciously undertake to subsidise some group or another, someone will have to pay for that. Officials don't pay from their own private funds. Anything they want to pay must be financed one way or another, by taxes, borrowing or begging for grants at the expense of the countries' integrity and perhaps sovereignty.

Those in Jordan who call for subsidising water, electricity, bread and feed; demand raising salaries, retirement pensions and social security entitlements without mention of the means to finance them, gain popularity. They are adored by the mob, but in reality they are stabbing the country in the back, sucking the blood of the homeland and risking its security and future.

Subsidies, and dealing with public funds recklessly pushed us to the crisis of foreign indebtedness. They effectively installed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a custodian for our economic policies. This came natural, because the inefficient planner needs a custodian to take care of him.

M. KAHIL



A recipe to solve Iraq

By Dr. Jamal Sha'er

A LARGE majority of the Arab people are concerned about the suffering of the Iraqi people and other people too. Most likely those who see things without being affected by outside influences can see that national reconciliation of the Iraqi people has become a required demand. If reconciliation is achieved, this Arab country, which was once a great nation, will be put on the right path and the correct solutions to its problems will be found—these problems that might escalate if this reconciliation does not crystallise.

There is no need to say that the main objective of this national reconciliation is the preservation of the unity of the Iraqi people on all of Iraq's territory and among the different sects. However, this objective could not materialise without following the only viable method (in dealing with the situation in Iraq). This method would entail holding presidential elections in which not only one candidate but many men and women can participate.

There should also be a freely elected parliamentary council. A senate that equally represents the three areas (of Iraq) and has the power to promulgate independent or joint legislation with the House of parliament and the president should also be formed.

It is only through this way that Iraqis can say to the world that they are one unified people. Only then, can Iraqi expatriates return to their country without fear, and Arabs and neighbouring countries and the whole world would raise their voices demanding the opening of a new page of cooperation with Iraq.

If our King and leader took the initiative to issue a call for a conference that unites the Iraqis in Amman, every Jordanian has to exert all possible efforts to make this call successful instead of jumping into conclusions and predicting its failure in advance, as if some people are only concerned about shaking the confidence in our country and in ourselves. Above all, we are in no need of proving our legitimacy and our qualification to issue

this call.

However, the question of who should be invited and who should be invited to the conference should be decided by the Iraqis themselves. These are vital questions that will ensure success and will exclude any interference of a non-Arab country.

Those who meet should be the forces that have effective influence and are capable of achievement and action. First of these is the Iraqi leadership itself. I call for initiating contacts at the highest level with the Iraqi leadership to attend the conference or to deputise others to participate. In addition, the spiritual leaders of Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites and other minorities should be invited as well as leaders and politicians known for their long experiences and clean conduct and who represent all political, tribal and diplomatic shades as well as academicians and human rights activists.

And since national reconciliation necessitates the opening of a new page, the door should be open to all contributions to rebuild Iraq and put its people on the path of progress. The

way to achieve this is to hold consultations at different levels to agree on the list of invitees from inside and the outside as well as to agree on the agenda and the objectives, their implementation and ways of ensuring commitment and follow up to the adopted recommendations.

What is desired and might contribute to the success of this project is the invitation of the largest number possible of Arab leaders to attend it personally and participate in making opinions and be witnesses to the commitment of all parties to the agreed upon recommendations. The first of the invitees could be the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, for reasons that might have become clear.

Such an effort needs sufficient time for preparations to make it successful. It is an attempt in my opinion that has a big chance to succeed and if it does not it will not be the end of the world. We would have tried our best. We are qualified to do that and we will be recompensed by God.

Al Ra'i.

Lower house rents are possible

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur
HOUSE RENT and the rent law in Jordan were the subject of my article last week. Today I want to share with you some of what the father of modern economics, Adam Smith, said about the topic of house rent almost two hundred and twenty years ago. The arguments of all economists will no doubt shed new light on our present problem.

Adam Smith recognised that house rent was divided into two parts, the first was a building rent and the second was a ground rent. "The building rent is the interest or profit of the capital expended in building the house. In order to put the trade of a builder upon the same level with other trades, it is necessary that this rent should be sufficient, first to pay him the same interest which he would have got for his capital if he had lent it upon good security, and, secondly, to keep the house in constant repair, or, what comes to the same thing, to replace, within a certain term of years, the capital which had been employed in building it. The building rent ... is, therefore, every year regulated by the ordinary interest of money." (The Wealth of Nations 1776). As for the second part of the rent, the ground rent, the remainder of the rent received goes to rent the land. In other words, the rent received by the landlord should at least compensate him/her for whatever expenditure went to build the house and for the money he/she would have made if they had rented the land. How is the rent to be calculated? First, add up the value of the land (how much would you have sold it for) and the cost of the building which will lead you to an estimate of your fixed cost (F). Then estimate the amount of maintenance necessary to maintain the building in its original condition after a family rents it for one year (M). Second, multiply the F value by the market interest rate to obtain an estimate of forgone earnings from building the house.

The forgone earnings are calculated for the period of the rent contract. In other words, if you had bought a treasury note with the money spent on the building of the house then you would have made some revenue from the interest on this money (around 9.5 per cent in Jordan). So if the building cost was JD 100,000 your forgone earnings on the building alone is JD 9500. Add to this a maintenance cost which depends on the size and age and education level of prospective occupants. Let's assume your estimate of the maintenance cost for a prospective tenant be JD 500. Your total building rent is JD 10,000 for the coming year, not inclusive of the land rent.

Let the value of the land that the house was built on be also JD 100,000. The forgone earnings for a year on the land alone will be the earnings forgone from having sold the land and

having purchased a treasury note at 9.5 per cent which would have made you another JD 9500. Thus the total rent of the house according to Adam Smith is JD 19,500 per year.

The above rent estimate changes from year to year as the values of land and building change and as the interest rate changes. Since land value and the interest rate are not fixed, should one draw the contract for very short time periods? Maybe, however, one must also remember that these contracts are costly and their preparation is time consuming. Therefore, yearly contracts seem to be the favourite among landlords in the Western World, especially since the cost of time and legal services are higher there than in Jordan.

According to this method, presented to us hundreds of years ago, the rent law must simply uphold the rights of both parties as specified in rent contract. Unfortunately, the present law in Jordan makes the owner liable to all of the risks associated with interest rate and land price fluctuations which can make the landlord a net loser in the long run. If you receive JD 1,000 per year in rent under the present rent law and the market interest rate is 9.5 per cent, then the present value of the property is obtained by dividing the JD 1,000 by 9.5 per cent which is JD 10,526. Note that the higher the interest rate the lower your property value becomes. As a result, landlords either shy away from renting their property and opt to sell it instead to increase their control over their property or they charge exorbitant rents that are supposed to compensate the landlord for all possible property evaluations.

A law as important as the rent law should be based on sound economic principles; the present rent law is not. It is supposed to protect the poor but it doesn't. As I demonstrated last week, all it does is drive people into building expensive apartments in wealthy neighbourhoods to sell to the upper middle class instead of building inexpensive rental housing units for the lower classes.

The rental law more than any other law has been a cause of misery throughout Jordan. What will happen when it is replaced by a law that protects property and rental rights? People who have been paying the same rent they used to pay in the 1950s will have to pay higher rents, which is hardly unfair since their incomes have increased considerably since then. Simultaneously, more and more real estate investors, especially the institutional investors and major investment corporations, who are presently suffering from a surplus in the selling market, will move into the rental market. As the supply of rental property increases the high rents will fall. Overall a positive change will have occurred. Let's not wait too long.

By Philip Taubman

NEW YORK — Many Russians, to rephrase Winston Churchill, apparently believe that communism is the worst form of government except for all the other forms.

That seems astonishing. After enduring all those endless lines in the Arctic winter to buy a stunted head of cabbage, after quietly suffering all the grandiose nonsense about Lenin's ideals and studying Marxism-Leninism until the mind went numb, after watching your country sink into an economic and political stupor, how could you vote for the Communist Party?

Millions of Russians did, raising the Communist Party from the dead and making it the most powerful political organisation in Russia. The resurrection is disturbing, yet at the same time intriguing.

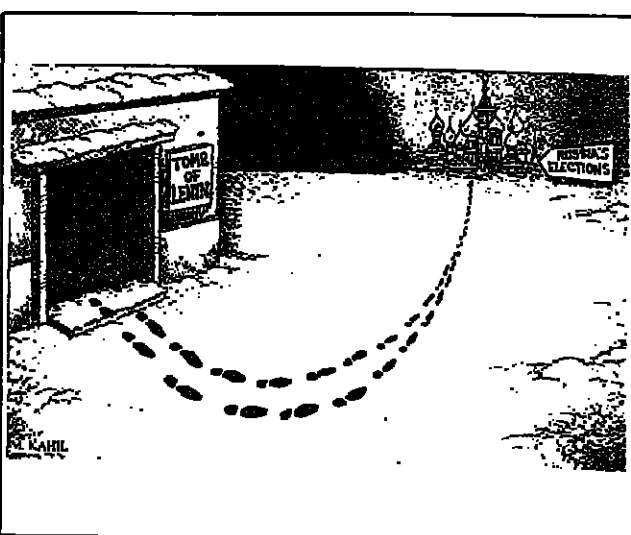
In one sense, the vote seems to be the political version of the Stockholm syndrome, the phenomenon common in ho-

tage cases when terrorised victims begin to identify with their captors.

Russia is still recovering from more than seven decades of Soviet tyranny, and many Russians apparently still identify more closely with the dictators who controlled their lives than with the democrats who freed them.

At the same time, many Russians, particularly the elderly and those still living in rural areas, appear genuinely nostalgic for the security blanket that came with communism.

For all the terrible pain it inflicted, and the millions of lives it destroyed, Soviet communism provided a crude safety net that gave citizens the illusion that the Communist Party was looking after their interests. The development of a free market has ripped away the net. The Communist system



was suffocating, patronising and calculated to keep the country obedient. Some Russians recognised it as a narcotic, and fought to overcome it. The internal security forces were always there to silence them.

Most Russians chose not to take that risk, or ceased to care what the purpose of the system was as long as bread was cheap, jobs were plentiful, education was universal, health care was free and vacations were

subsidized. The bread was excellent, but many people now seem to have forgotten that lots of the jobs were pointless, education was politically contaminated, health care was atrocious and Soviet vacations were Spartan.

The whole enterprise was ideologically dressed up as a workers' paradise. Although some Russians were true believers, most were smart enough to see through the pseudo-science. But the system still enveloped them.

Now that people have had a taste of unemployment, inflation, crime and other problems that have come with democracy, it is shrewd politics for the new Communists to suggest that the old days were actually pretty good. The party, at least for now, has distanced itself from the most brazen practices of the past, includ-

ing one-party politics, censorship and repression of dissent.

The reporting and the polling data from Russian show that the Communists gained from discontent about an uneven economy and upheaval in Russian life. Voters in Moscow, St. Petersburg and some other urban centres, where the benefits of reform have materialised most quickly, voted for reform candidates. Nearly everywhere else, Communists and nationalists did well, singing from essentially the same page of promises about restoring order and economic stability, shorthand for the Communist safety net.

Reform in Russia is far from dead, but it has run into a formidable obstacle — the past. To prevail in the months and years ahead, the reformers will have to convince millions of their countrymen that the uncertainty of freedom is preferable to the security of communism, as deadening as it was.

The New York Times

Lower house
nts are possible

Salvage project in Southern Ghors highlights scale, persistence of tomb robbing tradition

By Rami G. Khouri

Special to
the Jordan Times

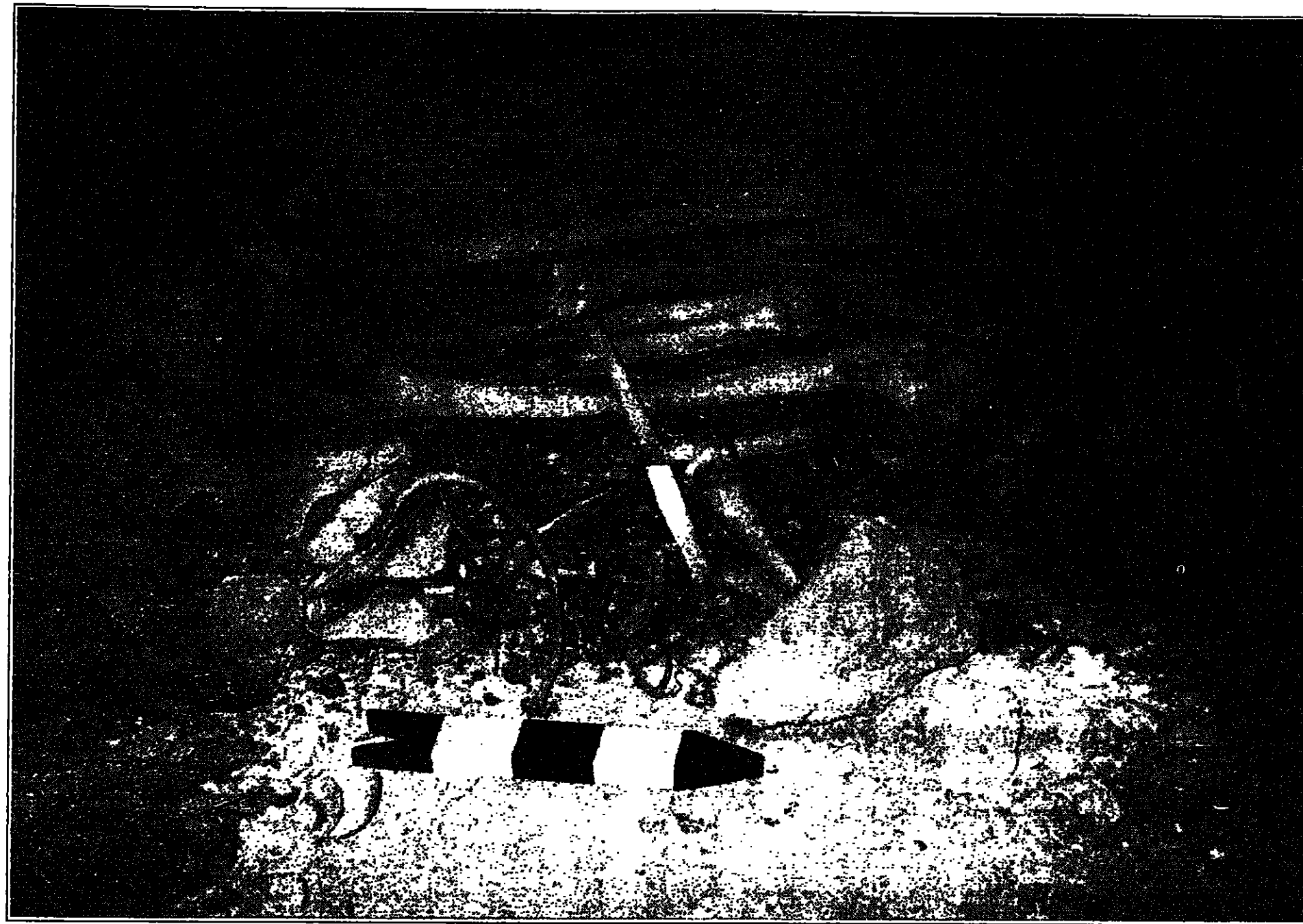
The vexing problem of how to protect Jordanian antiquities sites from the plundering of tomb robbers and their expanding network of clients in Jordan has been dramatised again by recent events at the huge Early Bronze Age cemetery at Bab ed-Dhra, along the south-east coast of the Dead Sea. A recent spree of grave robbing in an area that was not previously known to house a cemetery prompted American archaeologist David McCreery and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities to mount a brief salvage excavation that has added some new information to our knowledge of the culture of the people who inhabited that area five thousand years ago, and our knowledge of the market for stolen antiquities in Amman.

What is so shocking about the theft of tomb goods, mainly pottery, at Bab ed-Dhra is not only the extent of the looting (hundreds of tombs at a time in some cases) or its long time scale (the problem has been known since the site was first explored in 1924); it is also that the pace of tomb robbing has increased in the Southern Ghors region in recent years, and that stolen antiquities from Early Bronze Age cemeteries are now routinely and openly sold in reputable retail shops in Amman.

The four-day Bab ed-Dhra Salvage Operation in November aimed to map the site, determine its relationship to other known Early Bronze (EB) Age cemeteries in the immediate area, and collect representative pottery, bone samples and any other material goods from tombs that had been illicitly opened and pilfered. Dr McCreery, a professor of religion and archaeology at Willamette University (Oregon, USA) who spent the last half year in Jordan as a Fulbright Scholar, excavated at Bab ed-Dhra in the 1970s and is well versed in Early Bronze Age issues.

His efforts this year identified 39 new EBIA shaft tombs that had been opened by the robbers. Shaft tombs typically comprise a vertical central shaft dug into the ground, from which separate burial chambers radiate out horizontally. Tombs could have up to five separate burial chambers connected to a single shaft, though two or three chambers was most typical. The average size of the shafts was about one metre in diameter and two metres in depth. The average oval-shaped burial chamber was 1.8 metres long, 1.7 metres wide and 85 centimetres high.

The 39 tombs opened by the robbers included a total of 64 burial chambers, of which 44 were unsilted and 20 silted. The silted chambers were full of silt (water, sand and marl) that seeped



A typical burial of disarticulated skeletons in an Early Bronze Age tomb at Bab ed-Dhra' (Photo by D. McCreery)

into them through natural action during the last five millennia. The deeper chambers tended to be unsilted, and in some cases included some remarkably well preserved bones and funerary items such as reed mats or wooden objects.

Nomads or settled villagers?

The EBIA period is conventionally dated to around 3200-2900 BC, with the very earliest EBIA era dated to around 3200-3100 BC. Also known as the "proto-urban period", the EBIA period is historically important because it immediately preceded the first known walled towns that appeared in Palestine, Jordan and others parts of the Levant in the EBII period (c. 2900-2700 BC). Most historians and archaeologists assume that EBIA people in the southern Jordan region lived nomadic or semi-nomadic lives and returned seasonally to bury their dead at huge cemeteries such as those at Bab ed-Dhra and other places in the Jordan Valley.

This thesis is being challenged by some archaeologists who believe that EBIA cultures probably included permanent villages and settlements that we have not identified — either because scholars today have not searched for them sufficiently

vigorously, or because the nature of the settlements (tent, or straw dwellings, or low mounds of tumbled mudbrick homes) makes them inherently difficult or impossible to identify. Dr McCreery reports that recent bulldozing activity has exposed some mudbrick walls west of Bab ed-Dhra that probably date from the EBIA period — perhaps from one of the elusive EBIA settlements that may have existed contemporaneously with the early cemetery?

The main reason why EBIA peoples are assumed to have been nomadic is that their burials are almost all secondary burials of disarticulated skeletons — piles of bones that are no longer in a complete skeleton but rather are piled up in a mass of bones, with the skulls of nearly lined up next to the body bones. It is assumed that nomadic people on the move buried their dead in temporary cairns (stone piles) that allowed the body to decompose until only the skeleton was left; the bones were then carried in a bag for re-burial in their final resting place in the Bab ed-Dhra cemetery.

Dr McCreery suggests that we may have to revise our commonly accepted interpretations of EBIA culture in southern Jordan in light of the information being gleaned from Bab ed-

Dhra and other sites. The predominance of disarticulated skeletons in the EBIA tombs is not necessarily an indicator of nomadic cultures, he says, because disarticulated skeletons were also common in the "charnel houses" that EBII-III townspeople used to bury their dead. It is possible that the cairns used for burials around the country were only temporary deconcentration chambers where the dead body was placed in order for the flesh and organs to decompose, and in antiquity were not intended to be permanent burial sites.

Disarticulated secondary burials are also practised today by villagers as well as nomads. Dr McCreery believes that we should also take into consideration the possibility that EB cultures had a different view of death than we do today. Perhaps the EB people saw death as merely another act in a person's life, and thought that the dead person departed on a voyage to another world while his or her body was decomposing — with the total decomposition of the body marking the end of the voyage, at which point the bones could be collected and permanently placed in the ancestral burial ground.

He also points out another factor that argues for a settled rather than a nomadic population in the

EBI period: the very intensive exploitation of the burial ground. The tomb chambers were often dug so close together that they opened into one another, creating a kind of honeycombing effect. This suggests that the people who dug the graves knew exactly where the adjacent chambers were located. This argues well for resident tomb cutters who lived permanently in the area and specialised in this activity, rather than itinerant nomads who passed through once or twice a year and cut new graves as needed.

All the skeletons found were disarticulated, except for one fully articulated adult skeleton against the back wall of one chamber. Most bone piles were found in the centre of the chambers, with skulls laid to the left of the entrance and the bone piles and pottery grave goods around the right side. Most chambers had several burials, both adults and younger people, with three-to-five skulls commonly found in each chamber.

The bone piles were placed on reed mats, most of which had disintegrated into a powdery form, though in several cases water seepage had formed clear impressions of the reed weaving patterns in the floor. McCreery's team also found uncarbonized wood fragments in ten different

chambers. The most common wood items were staffs measuring some 3 cm in diameter (probably used as walking sticks), but included the remains of a wooden bowl.

An unusual find was a kind of flat wooden "pallet" or "board", of which four were identified. They measured around half a metre long, 2-6 centimetres thick, and some 20 centimetres wide, with one rough and one smooth side and a slightly bowed overall shape. They look like miniature threshing sleds, and originally had several holes in them. The purpose of these wooden boards remains a mystery.

Pottery recovered from the looted tombs included 54 whole and seven partial objects, with evidence that the robbers only were interested in whole objects in perfect condition. A bowl with a few missing rim chips was left behind, presumably because the robbers — or their patrons — thought it was too damaged to sell. The most common pottery shapes were large and medium V-shaped bowls, followed by medium jars, small bowls, and jugs. The pottery seems to closely resemble the early to middle EBIA pottery previously excavated in Cemetery A.

Dr McCreery concludes from the brief salvage sea-

son that the area under question is an extension of a larger known ancient cemetery and not a new distinct cemetery, and that several hundred or even several thousand unexcavated tombs remain to be examined in the area.

How to protect our heritage?

This raises important and ever more urgent questions about what can or should be done in Jordan to identify unexplored ancient cemeteries and protect them from illicit tomb robbers. "The recent explosion of tomb robbing activity at Bab ed-Dhra, Safi and Feifeh, coupled with the ambitious development plans for this region in the post-peace era, presents a compelling argument for intensified efforts to protect the antiquities of the Southern Ghors and to conduct further scientific investigations before more data is lost," Dr McCreery told the Jordan Times in a recent interview in Amman.

The naked theft of Jordanian antiquities and our cultural heritage, symbolised by the sale in Amman of EB pottery from Bab ed-Dhra and other Southern Ghors sites, reconfirms yet again the urgent need to seek a solution to the problem of tomb robbing and illegal excavations. It is now becoming

more clear that antiquities theft is not merely due to poverty at the local level near the ancient sites; it also seems to be part of an organised nationwide and international market that includes peddlers in Amman visiting people's homes. One of the unknown but important issues is the involvement of merchants, patrons and middlemen from the main Jordanian cities in the highlands.

While it had always been assumed that most tomb robbing was the work of poor local residents of the Southern Ghors, many archaeologists now tend to lean towards the theory that this is a well organised industry managed by wealthy, powerful patrons and middlemen in Amman and other highland cities who hire the tomb robbers and channel their stolen goods into retail outlets in Jordan and probably abroad as well. A typical Early Bronze Age cup can be bought in otherwise reputable handicrafts shops in Jabal Amman for around eleven dinars. The same piece, when smuggled out of the country, sells for between \$50 and \$100 in Israel, Europe or North America. Given the scale of tomb robbing in Jordan, this is an enormously profitable business. More disturbing are the signs that some stolen grave goods are being sold in handicrafts outlets in which government-owned banks are important shareholders.

The fact is, the mechanics, patrons and causes of the obviously expanding Jordanian tomb robbing industry are not well known, because they have never been systematically studied. Whether this is due to lack of concern or lack of means among the pertinent authorities in Jordan also is not clear. What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is the birth of an organised criminal network of tomb robbers and merchants who practise their craft in the open, and who are also almost certainly developing organised links with international criminal networks of antiquities peddlers.

The Bab ed-Dhra situation begs a response from government and private sector authorities who have never been able to formulate a credible response to the continuing theft and retail sale of our ancient cultural heritage. The Department of Antiquities has traditionally tried to address the problem by fencing off sites or hiring local guards, but these measures have not had any significant impact on the tomb robbers. The larger problem reflects two basic issues: the fact that the government has never given the Department of Antiquities the money and manpower to deal with this problem, and the fact that Jordan has never tried to develop a national policy to explore means of redressing the problem other than through police actions.

King expresses hope

(Continued from page 1)

selves and Jordan has nothing to do with it. The subject does not revolve around a Jordanian-Iraqi federation or confederation at all.

"Whoever examines the UN Security Council resolutions will find that they are not based on removing the mass destruction weapons alone but they talk about human rights, the north and the south and other issues. Given the fact that we have not succeeded so far in making any progress on the road of removing the agony of the Iraqis, it means we regrettably failed to reach a result through dialogue with our brothers in Iraq at the leadership level."

Referring to the proposal of Jordan hosting a conference for the Iraqi opposition

groups, the King said: "There is no talk about any date or any opposition. But these groups had met in other Arab capitals and continue to do so. In fact our talk stemmed from the pain and the fear over Iraq, its present and future should the Iraqis fail to agree on their fate and on tackling their problem."

On normalisation of relations between Israel and Jordan the King said: "So far the relations are good and the two sides ratified all their agreements stipulated in the peace treaty. But as to the positive result in the wider sense I believe we need some more time because the process requires more time."

In reply to a question about which stage is more

dangerous: dealing with war or peace the King said: "From an Arab point of view I believe that the war option was the one that drove us to the present situation. (War) based on sentiments devoid of reason resulted in a record of tragedies that befell the nation."

"Peace opens the opportunity for this people... We are in a race against time to enable the Arab citizens to achieve what others had achieved ahead of them."

Asked if there was any intention of a government reshuffle in Jordan the King said: "There are no plans for that before passing the budget (through Parliament) afterwards we will see how matters develop."

Violence in S. Lebanon

(Continued from page 1)

around villages near the attack scene and helicopter gunships raked the area with fire, without causing any casualties, according to Lebanese police.

Itamar Kabinovich, Israel's U.S. ambassador and member of the peace talks delegation, said: "Israel cannot accept a situation in which we continue discussions with Syria while rockets continue to be fired."

The United States was taking "firm moves towards Syria" to stop the attacks, he said.

The warnings contrasted with the upbeat assessments of the peace talks.

Israeli Housing Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer said: "for the first time the negotiations began to address fun-

damental issues."

And chief Syrian negotiator Walid Muallim told AFP by telephone from the United States that "the climate was not tense and the atmosphere was comfortable and different" from that of previous rounds and the talks were "useful."

The United States said it was "very encouraged" by the peace talks and expressed confidence that the new rocket attacks on Israel would not slow the process.

Israel and Syrian negotiators, who met for three days this week, unexpectedly stayed on in Washington rather than return to their capitals ahead of a new round of discussions next week.

A U.S. official, who asked not to be named, said that

talks aimed at ending a decades-old state of war were continuing over the weekend "on an informal basis" at undisclosed venues in the Washington area.

No word has filtered out on the substance of the discussions that opened Wednesday at a former plantation outside of the U.S. capital under a strict news blackout.

But Brian Cullin, a White House spokesman, said Saturday: "We were very encouraged with the progress of the talks this week."

The talks on the eastern shore of the state of Maryland were originally scheduled to adjourn before resuming on Wednesday. But negotiators decided instead to remain here to prepare for the next round.

"This is an indication that the talks were constructive," an administration official said.

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Rifai: Investments in new projects total JD 276m

By Khattab Salman
Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — Investments in new projects in Jordan totaled JD 276 million (\$394.3 million) in 1995, according to the Investment Promotion Corporation (IPC).
IPC Director-General Taleb Rifai told the Jordan Times that 118 projects enjoyed the exemptions provided by the investment promotion law this year.
"Total investment in these projects was JD 276 million, JD 95 million (\$135.7 million) of which were loans from bank," Dr. Rifai said.
He noted that the total number of job opportunities provided by these projects was 7,637 which would help in easing the high employment rate in Jordan.
Official figures put the unemployment rate in Jordan between 15 and 18 per cent.
Dr. Rifai pointed out that a total of 7,572 new companies were registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade in 1995.
Of the total number, 7,306 were Jordanian, 222 were Arab, and 44 were foreign.
"The total capital of these

companies was JD 341 million (\$487.1 million) with new Jordanian companies accounting for JD 303 million (\$432.9 million), Arab companies JD 31 million (\$44.3 million), and foreign companies JD 7 million (\$10 million)," Dr. Rifai added.
Jordan had introduced an investment encouraging package for foreign investors before the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit that was held in Amman last October, in order to improve investment climate in Jordan. The package provided freedom of capital movement and equal treatment of foreign investors as their Jordanian counterparts.
The government also enacted a law last week that eliminated curbs on foreigners buying on the stock market in Jordan.
"Records at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) show that investments in 1995 reached JD 417 million (\$595.7 million)," Dr. Rifai noted. Foreigners own 32 per cent of the AFM's capitalised stock which amounts to \$4.4 billion in total.

Iraq signs deal to supply oil to Jordan in 1996

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq agreed Saturday to supply 4.4 million tonnes of oil to Jordan in 1996 and said the signing of the deal had not been affected by Amman giving refuge earlier this year to prominent Iraqi defectors.
"We have agreed on quantities, their prices and financial conditions," said Iraqi Oil Minister Amir Mohammad Rasheed at the signing ceremony in Baghdad.
"The quantity of crude oil is 3.2 million tonnes a year and regarding oil products approximately 1.2 million tonnes," the minister told Reuters.
The agreement represents the annual renewal of a deal first struck during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis when Saudi Arabia stopped supplying Jordan with oil to punish Amman for its pro-Iraqi stance.
Mr. Rasheed said negotiations on the deal were not hampered by the cooling off in relations between Amman and Baghdad following the defection in August to Jordan of two sons-in-law of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein along with their families.
"In our contacts... there is

absolutely none of this coolness reflected in any way," he said. "Contrary to this, it was done in an atmosphere of brotherhood and between brotherly countries. This was how we felt it, experienced it and implemented it."
According to the Iraqi news agency INA, the agreement was signed for Jordan by Energy Ministry Secretary General Ahmad Mohammad Al Bashir and for Iraq by Taha Humud Musa, senior under-secretary at the Iraqi oil ministry.
Iraq will send the oil by truck across the border as there is no pipeline linking the two countries.
Iraq and Jordan have agreed in principle to construct a pipeline but the project has gone no further than initial feasibility studies.
"It (the project) is not something that we expect (to happen) next year," Mr. Rasheed said.

House panel wants early wage increases, more aid to poor and job creation schemes

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Financial Committee of the Lower House of Parliament insisted that the increase of JD 10 to salaries of civil servants should be effective as of the beginning of January and not the month of May as the government planned.
The committee, which has finished discussing the 1996 draft budget and presented it to House Speaker Sa'ad Hayel Srour in preparation for its discussion by the House next Tuesday, stressed that the continuous rise in prices has weakened the purchasing power of Jordanian families and called on the

government to adopt the appropriate means to put an end to price hikes.
While it considered the government's subsidies to some of the commodities as a burden on the state's budget, especially that the prices have risen internationally, it insisted on the importance of providing support for poor families and reconsidering the food coupons system that has been largely criticised recently. It also proposed that the government reduce the price of bread and give financial and direct support to poor families.
However, the committee rejected what the government said was a 2.3 per cent rise in prices in 1995 and insisted that prices had in-

creased by a larger percentage.
It recommended that the price index of the cost of living should be reevaluated and a precise survey of the families' salaries should be carried out to clearly define the number of families who are qualified to receive food coupons. In addition, it said that the level of poverty should be reconsidered.
In its report, the committee also complained that the problem of unemployment could not be solved by providing 3,000 jobs as the government said in its budget report. It insisted on the need to create more chances for investment to provide jobs for a larger number of employees.

The committee also insisted that foreign labour should be strictly monitored and that support for the Armed Forces should continue.
Under the chairmanship of Hashem Dabbas, the committee has held several meetings in discussing the draft budget over the past two weeks. Before drafting its final recommendations, the committee consulted with Finance Minister Basel Jandaneh, the general director of the General Budget Department and the ministers of industry and trade, labour, public works, planning, health, water and irrigation and several directors and economy experts.

Iran, Russia to boost long-term cooperation

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran and Russia have agreed to boost long-term economic and technical cooperation at the end of a three-day visit by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Davydov, a joint statement said Friday.
Iranian and Russian sources said they would cooperate over the next 10 years, after Mr. Davydov, who led a high-ranking political and economic delegation, held talks with a series of Iranian leaders.
"The two countries decided to enter into long-term cooperation on the basis of mutual interests and independence of other countries," the official agency IRNA said.
A Russian official said: "This cooperation concerns different projects in the military, nuclear, oil, energy and banking fields."

trying to persuade other countries to join its economic boycott of Iran, which it accuses of supporting international terrorism, charges strongly denied by Tehran.
Mr. Davydov, who is responsible for economic relations, vowed Thursday to defend Russia's "strategic" relations with Iran against pressure from third countries.
"Russia accords great importance to its strategic relations with Iran and it will not allow any country to interfere," Mr. Davydov said, quoted by Tehran radio, in an apparent reference to U.S. demands on Moscow to end its military and nuclear cooperation with Tehran.
Russian aid for developing the Bushehr nuclear plant in southern Iran as well as building other plants in the

Khuzistan province was high on the agenda of Mr. Davydov's talks.
He met with First Vice President Hassan Habibi, Defence Minister Mohammad Furuzandeh, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, Energy Minister Bijan Namdar-Zangeneh and Oil Minister Gholamreza Azadeh as well as the vice-president and director of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation.
Iranian sources said the visit had helped "to define the framework of our cooperation for the next 10 years" with Moscow.
Mr. Davydov signed a banking accord with Iranian Economy Minister Morteza Mohammad Khan on "reciprocal financial commitments."

IRNA said.
The talks had also focused on "ways of repaying" the Iranian debt to Russia estimated at more than \$400 million, Russian sources said.
Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Rafsanjani could meet "in the coming months, perhaps in a third country in central Asia," Russian sources said.
The two countries have also adopted a similar stand on the Caspian Sea which they want to be accorded a special status.
Mr. Davydov said Thursday: "Outside interference is unacceptable. The resources of the Caspian Sea only belong to the countries bordering it," again in an apparent reference to U.S. involvement in an oil consortium exploring three Azerbaijani fields in the sea.

Russia stays firm on economic reforms but aims to help poor

MOSCOW (R) — A senior minister, giving an upbeat assessment of Russia's economy, said Saturday that reforms would stay on course in 1996, but the government would do more to help those hurt by the painful transformation.
First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets said the government would turn its attention more to the social sphere — suggesting it would take account of the communists' success in this month's parliamentary election.
"We plan to keep a general tough anti-inflationary line in financial policy, while trying to find ways to resolve the problems of the social sphere and domestic producers," ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Mr. Soskovets as telling Russian reporters.
Interfax news agency said this would mean protecting some domestic producers against foreign competition and increasing social spending. It gave no details.
"The government's tough financial-budetary course is necessitated by market re-

forms, and practically all parties acknowledge there is no alternative to them," Interfax quoted Mr. Soskovets as saying.
But it said he added: "Some corrections will certainly be made strengthening the social direction of the government's economic policy."
Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and President Boris Yeltsin have said economic reforms will stay on the same course, despite the Communist Party's big gains in this month's election to the State Duma lower house of parliament.
But pressure to slow reforms has grown because the communists based their success on widespread discontent with the hardships endured under this government.
Mr. Yeltsin called Thursday for an improvement in the work of the economy ministry and said "saboteurs" should be rooted out.
But Mr. Soskovets said the overall economic perform-

ance in 1995 showed that the economy was stabilising and he singled out lower inflation and a relatively stable rouble as the high points.
Mr. Soskovets also said many Russian factories had now adapted to new working conditions following Western-style reforms, although production had continued to slump in some sectors such as light industry.
He also promised radical measures in 1996 to sort out the "vicious circle" of unpaid debts of many enterprises.
Anatoly Chubais, also a first deputy prime minister, said separately that the attack on inflation in 1995 had brought a breakthrough. Monthly inflation fell from almost 18 per cent in January to less than four per cent in December.
"Our main task was to severely cut the pace of inflation, which had reached 18 per cent a month, to a great extent, we managed to achieve this," Mr. Chubais told Interfax, noting that lower inflation would allow Russian interest rates to fall.

Bahrain reports rise in national workers

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain Friday reported an increase in the number of nationals taking up jobs in the private sector as part of the Gulf island's drive to lessen reliance on expatriate labour. During the first 11 months of this year, 7,251 Bahrainis found jobs with the help of the labour affairs ministry while a large number of other nationals were employed in private institutions independently.
"The share of Bahraini employees in the private sector during the first 11 months of the current year reached 29.3 per cent, which is close to the target of 30 per cent set by the ministry for 1995 while it was 27.1 per cent at the end of 1994," Labour Affairs Minister Abdul Nabi Al Shoaib said.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen
GLASBERGEN

"Remember, our dinner guests are really into environmental issues. Tell them we made the candles with our own earwax!"

JUMBLE
Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.
NAGGI
ROFYT
NIPURT
OILNAB
Answer here:
Yesterday's Jumbles: EMERY HAVOC CASHEW ARTERY
Answer: The announcer considered his bloopers this — "ERR" WAVES

HOROSCOPE
FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1995
ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Home affairs may be a little difficult during the daytime today, but the evening is fine from the romantic standpoint for you and your mate.
TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Do nothing which cause an outsider difficulty today, and then you can enjoy pleasure with your close friends and associates.
GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Early this morning cut down on unnecessary expenditures, and later this evening you can handle duties which interest you.
MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You feel that you are not having the pleasures in life which should be yours, but by tonight all this will change for you and for the better.
LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Secret matters do not work as well as you wish at this time, persevere and they improve. Get you home in better order for there to be harmony.
VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your friends may not be in a position to agree with your wishes during the daytime today, so be philosophical about it.
LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Don't try to influence a higher-up who may not be in the mood for such antics. Tonight you get good ideas which will help your future.
SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Pigeon-hole new ideas for the time being, and later tonight you can show your finest talents. Be with close friends and have fun with them.
SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Try to keep some promise you have made at this time even though it may seem boring to you now and is not prosperous to your abilities.
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Don't keep needing a fellow associate during the daytime today and later in the evening, you can be with clever friends who can be helpful.
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can get many career activities completed at home today and please your family in the evening. A helper can be very cooperative.
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a good day today to get the wrinkles out of your creative talents during the daytime, but go to some new site later in the evening. Make new friends.
Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

THE Daily Crossword by Lee G. Barrow

ACROSS
1 Anthropoids
5 Round
10 Coffee
14 Farmer's locale?
15 Investigate (with into)
16 Core of a nerve fiber
17 Concert halls
18 Pungent bulb
19 Coin
20 Cyclorama/old football play
23 Go in
24 Lead removers
28 Aves.
29 Desert
33 Profane, in Hawaii
34 Inner self
35 Colt
36 Illegal rebates/gives in
41 Trumpeter Al
42 Trail user
43 Wring
44 Inane
47 National monogram
50 Audition fare
52 Hammerin' Hank
54 Ruin/retreat
58 Cross a stream
61 Like the inside of a chimney
62 Composer Paul
63 Satanic
64 Mistake
65 Layer
66 Absurd
67 Part of a Mae West quote
68 "I could — horse!"

DOWN
1 Brick houses
2 Formalist
3 Opus
4 Quench
5 Smell
6 Gambling town
7 Radar item
8 Called up
9 Actor Robert
10 Playing cards
11 Chop
12 Werther — Braun
13 Fornicary denizen
21 Imbued
22 Container
25 Plenty, poetically
26 Horse color
27 — ammoniac
30 Clothing protector
31 Dr.'s org.
32 Mexican food
34 Play a part
35 In favor of
36 A Carson
39 Sialom
40 Sticker
41 Emoter
44 UN agcy.
45 Searches for water
46 Neglect
47 Muse of astronomy
48 Type of wrench
49 Turkish city
51 In a strange way
53 Lesser
55 Cast or shadow starter
56 Minute particle
57 Harp-like instrument
58 Mediterranean hat
59 Eggs
60 — Tin Tin

Yesterday's puzzle solved:

SPAT REDS DEMIT
TOUR HAIL OLIVE
ALTA ECCE CONAN
GOOFFTHEDEEPEND
ART DANE
STALE HIRT LIS
LODGES ANT SENT
EMMA COUGH OMNI
PEER OPT YAMMER
TIN TREE REARS
GOIN TAP
MAKESABIGSPASH
ARIES ODEA ANTI
MANSE OLOR COLE
EGGED KEYS ENOS

Peanuts

SO WHO ASKED YOU?
WHO ASKED ME WHAT?
WHO ASKED YOU WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE SAID IF SOMEONE HAD ASKED YOU!
AND WHO ASKED YOU?
DOGS CAN'T TALK

Andy Capp

I'M GOING TO DO AN EXERCISE... WILL YOU DO THE COUNTING FOR ME?
IF YOU INSIST
ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR...
THIRTY-EIGHT, THIRTY-NINE, FORTY-ONE...
WELL, CARRY ON...
THAT'S ENOUGH, PET! I'M GETTING TIRED

Mutt'n'Jeff

TWO DOLLARS AN HOUR FOR THIS BOAT IS A LOT BUT WE'LL HAVE FUN!
OH, DEAR, IT'S STARTING TO RAIN! YOU'D BETTER ROW BACK, JEFF!
BUT WE JUST GOT HERE!
WE'RE GETTING DRENCHED!
BUT OUR HOUR ISN'T UP!

NSCP rejects ministry's intervention in dispute with coffee merchants

Obeidat says case will be presented to parliament

By Ghaila Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — President of the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) Mohammed Obeidat Saturday rejected the interference of the Ministry of Supply in the society's conflict with coffee merchants over the prices of coffee.

Dr. Obeidat told the Jordan Times that the ministry, which he said is "defending merchants more than they are (merchants) defending themselves" should have no role in this issue.

He added that instead of being the "arbitrator" the ministry has become a party to the dispute, which started earlier this month when the society urged citizens to boycott coffee to force merchants to bring down its prices.

"We regret the minister of supply's biased stand in favour of coffee merchants at the expense of consumers. (This stand) goes contrary to the government's support for the coffee-boycott campaign," said a statement issued by the NSCP Saturday.

The Ministry of Supply has indicated approval of coffee prices, saying they were based on legitimate calculations of cost and profit.

Yahya Qawasmeh, director of studies at the ministry, challenged the NSCP to pre-

sent any documents that support its claim that coffee was overpriced.

The NSCP statement described as "strange" the ministry's position, saying that international coffee prices are known. It said the ministry should consult the Customs Department record for accurate information on the prices at which coffee has been imported for the last few months and since they went down at the international market.

Dr. Obeidat said that unofficial data obtained privately from custom's employees prove that the cost at which merchants import coffee is lower than what the ministry's figures show.

He said the reason for this discrepancy is that the ministry usually depends on figures provided by the merchants themselves and does not obtain them from official documents.

The statement said that "unexpectedly", the society has been excluded from the meetings which were held between the ministry and coffee merchants.

"Usually the ministry of supply invites the society to participate in its meetings with merchants regarding pricing of commodities. What we have observed through (the ministry's meetings with coffee merchants) is that the ministry has depended on documents provided by merchants without rely-

ing on its official sources," said the statement.

Dr. Obeidat called for a meeting between the society and coffee merchants during which they would submit their figures and compare them with the ones available to the society.

"The ball is in the merchant's court," Dr. Obeidat added.

He said that the two coffee merchants, whose names he preferred not to mention, had lower prices than the ministry's.

On the other hand, Dr. Obeidat said the reduction of the prices of the "robusta" and "Brazilia" beans does not fulfill the society's demand because "robusta" is considered a "low grade coffee" whose prices are lower than those of grades which the campaign is targeting.

Coffee retailers had told the Jordan Times that "robusta" was not sold to the public until the ministry decided to reduce its price, mixed with "Brazilia", to JD 3.5 per kilogramme.

Dr. Obeidat argued that the consumer does not know the difference between the "good" and "low grade" coffee, adding that based on the international rates, prices of "low grade coffee" should be reduced to JD 2.25.

He said that based on the figures the society obtained through customs employees,

the proposed price is legitimate, challenging merchants to prove otherwise.

"Coffee merchants should end the confusion the consumers encounter regarding the kinds of coffee and the prices of each kind," he said.

He proposed that retailers present coffee beans in their shops according to their kinds and prices.

In a bid to settle the conflict, Dr. Obeidat told the Jordan Times that the case will be presented to the Lower House of Parliament.

"The House should interfere," said Dr. Obeidat.

The NSCP statement said that through Parliament all information and documents will be presented and the truth will appear.

As for the boycott campaign Dr. Obeidat seemed optimistic and said that its success was "above all expectations".

Some Jordanians, on the other hand, criticised the NSCP's campaign, saying that such a campaign should target more important commodities.

Regarding this matter, Dr. Obeidat said that this campaign marks the beginning of the society's efforts to protect consumers' interests.

"The success of this campaign will prompt us to launch other campaigns in the future," Mr. Obeidat added.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 30/12/1995

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK LTD	640	148710	235.000	235.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	2240	100683	4.500	4.490
BANK OF JORDAN	100	380	3.750	3.800
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	5400	6671	1.240	1.240
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	625	245	2.330	2.500
THE HOUSING BANK	7900	39234	4.900	5.050
JORDAN CREDIT BANK	873	2651	3.030	3.040
JORDAN CREDIT BANK	39700	43791	1.120	1.130
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	10000	38578	3.850	3.850
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	420	2883	6.810	6.810
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	3950	14652	3.650	3.750
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	42450	38919	9.200	9.210
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	2240	2240	1.000	1.000
PHILADALPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	23300	35632	1.540	1.520
BANKS SECTOR	138094	385275	INDEX NUMBER: 188.25	CHANGE: +0.374
MIDDLE EAST INSURANCE	25000	89000	3.500	3.560
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	850	2358	2.800	2.750
ARAB UNION INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE	500	1260	2.400	2.520
AL-BAY AL-BAY INSURANCE	900	3935	4.350	4.300
INSURANCE SECTOR	27250	96550	INDEX NUMBER: 130.77	CHANGE: +0.557
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	17768	30913	1.750	1.720
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2250	4068	1.810	1.800
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT COMPANY	14200	14210	1.010	1.000
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	4900	5998	1.200	1.200
MACHINERY EQUIP. REPAIRING & MAINTENANCE	4150	2905	0.700	0.700
JORDAN PRESS & PUBLISHING /AD-DUSTOUR	500	3985	7.900	7.970
UNITED VEHICLE LEASE & CONSTRUCTION HOTEL	3100	7079	2.250	2.300
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	38250	129795	3.350	3.420
JORDANIAN SEPARATIST INVESTMENT HOLDING	700	218	1.150	1.090

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1800	2127	1.180	1.190
UNITED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	28750	2163	2.280	2.250
URBAN LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	38900	42685	1.110	1.150
SERVICES SECTOR	152768	303144	INDEX NUMBER: 129.91	CHANGE: +0.872
ATTACHED CONSTR. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	1000	2400	2.400	2.400
JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	16362	60350	3.700	3.690
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	42615	144913	3.490	3.550
THE ARAB POTASH	8000	46820	5.800	5.800
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	1288	86532	10.250	10.300
WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	10000	14300	1.470	1.430
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1250	4305	3.380	3.560
THE JORDAN WOODPULP MILL	1750	1374	7.920	7.400
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	42175	190229	4.690	4.610
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	136	841	6.080	6.250
JORDAN DAIRY	2950	580	2.350	2.350
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	200	480	2.400	2.400
THE PUBLIC MINING	282	521	2.800	2.940
AMMAN CHEMICAL DETERGENTS INDUSTRIES	1600	20043	12.600	12.600
SPINNING & WEAVING	2356	451	1.000	1.050
RAPIA INDUSTRIES	250	548	2.220	2.100
DAR AL-DHAMA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	160	1246	7.700	7.800
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	600	3236	5.350	5.500
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	31500	21300	3.600	3.600
ARAB PAPER CONVERSION & TRADING	18850	22736	1.420	1.430
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRIES	19223	31725	1.700	1.700
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	9000	9273	1.040	1.040
JOINT VENTURE PAPER-INDUSTRIAL INDUSTRIES	15000	39810	2.600	2.600
JORDAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	2150	8773	4.080	4.020
JORDAN ROCKWELL INDUSTRIES	500	560	1.280	1.220
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	2450	9274	3.850	4.000
JORDAN SUTURE-CHEMICALS	1500	2035	1.340	1.330
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3250	9694	1.050	1.020
KAMHER INVESTMENT	750	1192	1.600	1.590
UNIVERSAL PLASTER INDUSTRIES	2400	10715	4.450	4.370
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSES CO.	15000	39810	2.600	2.600
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	20350	39924	1.480	1.400
EL-DAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	3187	7141	2.250	2.250
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	16700	23216	1.400	1.390
DESIGN CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY	800	529	1.650	1.630
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	323826	873024	INDEX NUMBER: 129.95	CHANGE: +0.757
GRAND TOTAL	641938	1659993	INDEX NUMBER: 159.17	CHANGE: +0.785

BUSINESS

A review of news from the Arabic press

Four new major firms complete registration procedures, commence work

★ A NUMBER of new public shareholding companies have recently announced the completion of registration procedures and declared their commencement of operations. The companies are: The National Investment Real Estate Company, the United Textile Group Company and Al Saqr (Falcon) for Investment and Financial Services Company and the Amara Agricultural and Industrial Investments Company.

The National Investment Real Estate Company has a JD 2.5 million capital and will be run by a nine-member board of directors representing the Business Bank, the Housing Bank, the General Arabia Insurance Company, the Industrial Resources Company, Rajai Muasher and Brothers Company, the National Securities Company and Al Madan for Multi Investments Company, in addition to Mohammad Zuhdi Malhas and Mohammad Yacoub Al Uri. The head of the founding committee, Rajai Muasher, said the company would buy land and real estate in various areas of the country and would engage in building housing, tourism and commercial projects.

The United Textile Company has a JD 20 million capital spread among 50 shareholders who subscribed to JD 19 million, or 95 per cent of the equity, leaving only five per cent to be covered by new investors. According to Abdul Khaleq Mohammad Hussein, head of the founding committee, a portion of the capital is in the form of fixed assets, given by the partners in the group, valued at JD 12.9 million. The company aims at spinning natural and industrial threads and manufacturing textiles, in addition to trading in ready-made clothes. Mr. Hussein will head the board of directors which also comprises Nidal Abul Haj (vice chairman), Khaleq Hussein, Fawzi Sawwan, Usamah Sukkari, Ahmad Mbeideen and representatives from the Arab Bank, the Jordan Gulf Bank and Abdul Khaleq Mohammad and Sons Company.

The Al Saqr (Falcon) for Investment and Financial Services Company has a JD 5.5 million capital of which JD 4.125 million was covered by the founders and the remainder through private subscription. The company aims at investing in all sectors, conducting studies and consultancy reports and extending credits whether directly or indirectly through agreements with banks and financial institutions. According to Bassam Attari, vice-president of the founding committee, the company will be the first in the Kingdom to buy long-term receivables and debts as well as collecting and classifying credit information for the use of banks and credit institutions. Mr. Attari said the company will begin operations in early 1996. Al Saqr's shareholders are eight banks, three insurance companies and a number of investment firms. Board members are Faisal Al Sheikh Amin, Jawad Hadid, Bassam Attari, Fouad Bajjali, Ragheb Abdul Rahman, Fares Awartani, Farouq Ziaier, Ibrahim Abu Hijeil in addition to the Jordan French Insurance Company, the Orient for Investment Projects Company and the Girard Construction Company.

The Amara Agricultural and Industrial Investments Company has a JD 4 million capital of which 92.5 per cent, or JD 3.7 million, is spread among 57 founders and shareholders. The remaining JD 300,000 will be covered later by some investors. The company was registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade on Sept. 28, 1995, and it aims at carrying out all kinds of agricultural work, including marketing and exporting produce and setting up facilities for flower plantations and hot houses. In addition, the company aims at establishing industries to process animal, agricultural products and fish. Abdul Rahman Al Mughbrai is the board chairman and Aktham Qusous, Amin Beidas, said Hijazi, Ismail Arwan, Nabil Abu Ghazaleh and Sameh Al Mughbrai are board members (Al Rai + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Financial Markets			
in cooperation with Cairo Amman Bank			
U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close	New York Close	
	28/12/95	29/12/95	
Sterling Pound	1.5475	1.5515	
Deutsche Mark	1.4585	1.4565	
Swiss Franc	1.1555	1.1535	
French Franc	4.3215	4.3265	
Japanese Yen	102.60	102.42	
European Currency Unit	1.2745	1.2778	
* 100 to 1000			
** European Currencies of 100 to 1000			
Eurocurrency Interest Rates			
Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.37	5.37	5.38
Sterling Pound	6.50	6.50	6.51
Deutsche Mark	3.56	3.56	3.57
Swiss Franc	1.62	1.62	1.62
French Franc	4.65	4.65	4.65
Japanese Yen	0.16	0.16	0.16
European Currency Unit	5.18	5.12	5.08
Source: Reuters. All rates are for reference only. U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 to 1,000,000			
Forward Markets			
Month	USD/DM	DM/USD	DM/USD
Gold	387.30	7.70	5.19
Silver			0.100
* 100 to 1000			
General Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin			
Date: 30/12/1995			
Currency	Buy	Sell	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.2080	0.2100	
Sterling Pound	1.3664	1.3621	
Deutsche Mark	0.4919	0.4944	
Swiss Franc	0.6152	0.6152	
French Franc	0.1667	0.1669	
Japanese Yen	0.0040	0.0040	
Dutch Guilder	0.4395	0.4417	
Swedish Krona	0.0000	0.0000	
Italian Lira	0.0000	0.0000	
Belgian Franc	0.0000	0.0000	
* For 100			
Other Currencies			
Currency	Buy	Sell	Offer
Belgian Franc	1.6920	1.6760	
Lebanese Lira	0.043850	0.044450	
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898	
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.2070	0.2070	
Omani Rial	0.1635	0.1645	
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2100	
Omani Rial	0.6320	0.6310	
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933	
Creek Drachma	0.2875	0.3155	
Cypriot Pound	1.5225	1.5218	
* For 100			

A final look back at sports champions in 1995

By The Associated Press



NBA MVP Hakeem Olajuwon to their 2nd consecutive title

BASKETBALL

International

European Championship — Yugoslavia
European Champions Club Cup — Real Madrid, Spain
European player of the year — Arvids Sabonis, Real Madrid
European coach of the year — Zelimir Obradovic, Real Madrid
McDonald's Championship — Houston Rockets

Professional

United States (NBA) — Houston Rockets
Australia — North Melbourne Giants
France — Olympique d'Antibes
Germany — Bayer Leverkusen
Greece — Olympiakos Piraeus
Italy — Buckler Bologna
Spain — FC Barcelona

BOXING

WBA

Heavyweight — Bruce Seldon
Cruiserweight — Nate Miller
Light Heavyweight — Virgil Hill
Super Middleweight — Frank Liles
Middleweight — Jorge Castro

WBC

Heavyweight — Frank Bruno
Cruiserweight — Anacleto Wamba
Light Heavyweight — Fabrice Tiozzo
Super Middleweight — Nigel Benn
Middleweight — Quincy Taylor

IBF

Heavyweight — Frans Botha
Cruiserweight — Alfred Cole
Light Heavyweight — Henry Maske
Super Middleweight — Roy Jones Jr.
Middleweight — Bernard Hopkins
Junior Middleweight — Terry Norris
Welterweight — Felix Trinidad

SOCCER

Nations

Women's world championship — Norway
FIFA world youth championship (under-20) — Argentina
FIFA world under-17 championship — Ghana
Copa America — Uruguay
Intercontinental Cup — Denmark
Afro-Asian Cup — Nigeria
Caribbean Cup — Trinidad and Tobago
Central American Nations Cup — Honduras
Southeast Asian Games — Thailand

International Clubs

Toyota (Intercontinental) Cup — Ajax Amsterdam (Netherlands)
European Champions Cup — Ajax Amsterdam (Netherlands)
European Cup* Winners Cup — Real Zaragoza (Spain)

UEFA Cup — Parma (Italy)

European Super Cup — AC Milan (Italy)
Copa Libertadores (South American Championship) — Gremio (Brazil)
South American Super Cup — Independiente (Argentina)
CONCACAF Champions Cup — Saprissa (Costa Rica)
African Champions Cup — Orlando Pirates (South Africa)
CAF Cup — ES Sahel (Tunisia)
Asian Champions Cup (1994) — Thai Farmer's Bank (Thailand)
Asian Cup Winners Cup — Bellmare (Japan)

European Clubs

English League & Blackburn Rovers
English Football Association Cup — Everton
English League Cup — Liverpool
German Bundesliga — Borussia Dortmund
German Cup — Borussia Moenchengladbach
Italian League — Juventus
Italian Cup — Juventus
Spanish League — Real Madrid
Spanish Cup — Deportivo de La Coruna
French League — Nantes
French Cup — Paris-St. Germain
Netherlands League — Ajax Amsterdam
Netherlands Cup — Feyenoord of Rotterdam
Belgian League — Anderlecht
Belgian Cup — Club Brugge
Portuguese League — FC Porto
Portuguese Cup — Sporting Lisbon
Scottish League — Glasgow Rangers
Scottish Football Association Cup — Glasgow Celtic
Albanian League — FK Tirana
Albanian Cup — Teuta Dures
Armenian League — Shirak
Armenian Cup — Ararat Yerevan
Austrian League — Casino Salzburg

English League & Blackburn Rovers

English Football Association Cup — Everton
English League Cup — Liverpool
German Bundesliga — Borussia Dortmund
German Cup — Borussia Moenchengladbach
Italian League — Juventus
Italian Cup — Juventus
Spanish League — Real Madrid
Spanish Cup — Deportivo de La Coruna
French League — Nantes
French Cup — Paris-St. Germain
Netherlands League — Ajax Amsterdam
Netherlands Cup — Feyenoord of Rotterdam
Belgian League — Anderlecht
Belgian Cup — Club Brugge
Portuguese League — FC Porto
Portuguese Cup — Sporting Lisbon
Scottish League — Glasgow Rangers
Scottish Football Association Cup — Glasgow Celtic
Albanian League — FK Tirana
Albanian Cup — Teuta Dures
Armenian League — Shirak
Armenian Cup — Ararat Yerevan
Austrian League — Casino Salzburg

Polish League — Legia Warsaw

Polish Cup — GKS Katowice
Romanian League — Steaua Bucharest
Romanian Cup — Petrolul Ploiesti
Russian League — Spartak Moscow
Russian Cup — Moscow Dynamo
Slovakia League — Slovan Bratislava
Slovakia Cup — Inter Bratislava
Slovenia League — Olimpija
Slovenia Cup — Mura Sobota
Swedish League — IFK Goteborg
Swedish Cup — Halmstad
Swiss League — Grasshoppers
Swiss Cup — Sion
Turkish League — Besiktas

Five-time Tour de France winner Miguel Indurain

Austrian Cup — Rapid Vienna

Belarus League — Dinamo Minsk
Bulgarian League — Levski Sofia
Bulgarian Cup — Lokomotiv Sofia
Croatian League — Hajduk Split
Cyprus League — Anorthosis Famagusta
Cyprus Cup — Apoel Nicosia
Czech League — Sparta Prague
Czech Cup — Spartak Hradec Kralove
Danish League — Aalborg
Danish Cup — FC Copenhagen
Finland League — Haka
Finland Cup — HJK Helsinki
Greece League — Panathinaikos
Greece Cup — AEK Athens
Hungarian League — Ferencváros
Hungarian Cup — VAC Samsung
Iceland League — IA Akranes
Iceland Cup — KR Reykjavik
Irish League — Dundalk
Irish Cup — Derry City
Israeli League — Maccabi Tel Aviv
Israeli Cup — Maccabi Haifa
Latvian League — skonto Riga
Lithuanian League — Inkaras
Lithuanian Cup — Zalgiris Vilnius
Luxembourg League — Jeunesse Esch
Luxembourg Cup — Grevenmacher
Macedonia League — Vardar Skopje
Macedonian Cup — Silkes
Malta League — Hibernian
Malta Cup — Valletta
Moldovan League — Zimbru
Moldovan Cup — Tiligul
Northern Ireland League — Crusaders
Northern Ireland Cup — Linfield
Norway League — Rosenborg
Norway Cup — Molde

Asian Clubs

Japan — Yokohama Marinos

CONCACAF Clubs

Mexico — Necaxa
United States (A League) — Seattle Sounders

TENNIS

Australian Open

Men — Andre Agassi, United States
Women — Mary Pierce, France
Men doubles — Jared Palmer and Richey Reneberg, United States
Women double — Jana Novotna, Czech Republic, and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Spain
Mixed doubles — Natasha Zvereva, Belarus and Rick Leach, United States

French Open

Men — Thomas Muster, Austria
Women — Steffi Graf, Germany
Men doubles — Jacco Eltingh and Paul Haarhuis, Netherlands

Wimbledon

Men — Pete Sampras, United States
Women — Steffi Graf, Germany
Men doubles — Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde, Australia
Women doubles — Jana Novotna, Czech Republic and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Spain
Mixed doubles — Martina Navratilova and Jonathan Stark, United States

U.S. Open

Men — Pete Sampras, United States
Women — Steffi Graf, Germany
Men doubles — Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde, Australia
Women doubles — Gigi Fernandez, United States, and Natasha Zvereva, Belarus
Mixed doubles — Meredith McGrath and Matt Lucena, United States

ATP Tour

Newsweek Champions Cup — Pete Sampras
Lipton Championships — Andre Agassi
Monte Carlo Open — Thomas Muster
German Open — Andre Medvedev
Italian Open — Muster
World Team Cup — Sweden
Dunsmuir Ltd. Open — Agassi
Thriftyway ATP championships — Agassi
Open de la ville de Paris — Sampras

WTA Tour

Pan Pacific Open — Kimiko Date
Lipton Championships — Steffi Graf
Family Circle Cup — Conchita Martinez
Italian Open — Martinez
German Open — Arantxa Sanchez Vicario
Dunsmuir Ltd. Open — Monica Seles
European Indoors — Iva Majoli
Philadelphia Women's Tennis Championships — Graf
WTA Tour — championships — Graf
Fed Cup — Spain
Hopman Cup (mixed team) — Germany

Asian Clubs

Japan — Yokohama Marinos

CONCACAF Clubs

Mexico — Necaxa
United States (A League) — Seattle Sounders

TENNIS

Australian Open

Men — Andre Agassi, United States
Women — Mary Pierce, France
Men doubles — Jared Palmer and Richey Reneberg, United States
Women double — Jana Novotna, Czech Republic, and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Spain
Mixed doubles — Natasha Zvereva, Belarus and Rick Leach, United States

Turkish Cup — Trabzonspor

Ukrainian League — Dynamo Kiev
Welsh League — Bangor City
Welsh Cup — Wrexham
Yugoslavian League — Red Star Belgrade
Yugoslavian Cup — Obilic
South American Clubs
Argentine League — San Lorenzo-Velez Sarsfield
Brazilian National Championship — Botafogo
Bolivian League — San Jose
Chilean League — Universidad de Chile
Colombian League — Junior
Ecuadorian League — Barcelona
Paraguayan League — Olimpia
Peruvian League — Sporting Cristal
Uruguayan League — Penarol
Venezuelan League — Caracas FC

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French Open

Men — Thomas Muster, Austria
Women — Steffi Graf, Germany
Men doubles — Jacco Eltingh and Paul Haarhuis, Netherlands

Wimbledon

Men — Pete Sampras, United States
Women — Steffi Graf, Germany
Men doubles — Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde, Australia
Women doubles — Jana Novotna, Czech Republic and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Spain
Mixed doubles — Martina Navratilova and Jonathan Stark, United States

U.S. Open

Men — Pete Sampras, United States
Women — Steffi Graf, Germany
Men doubles — Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde, Australia
Women doubles — Gigi Fernandez, United States, and Natasha Zvereva, Belarus
Mixed doubles — Meredith McGrath and Matt Lucena, United States

ATP Tour

Newsweek Champions Cup — Pete Sampras
Lipton Championships — Andre Agassi
Monte Carlo Open — Thomas Muster
German Open — Andre Medvedev
Italian Open — Muster
World Team Cup — Sweden
Dunsmuir Ltd. Open — Agassi
Thriftyway ATP championships — Agassi
Open de la ville de Paris — Sampras

WTA Tour

Pan Pacific Open — Kimiko Date
Lipton Championships — Steffi Graf
Family Circle Cup — Conchita Martinez
Italian Open — Martinez
German Open — Arantxa Sanchez Vicario
Dunsmuir Ltd. Open — Monica Seles
European Indoors — Iva Majoli
Philadelphia Women's Tennis Championships — Graf
WTA Tour — championships — Graf
Fed Cup — Spain
Hopman Cup (mixed team) — Germany

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ATP Tour world singles championship — Boris Becker

ATP Tour world doubles championship — Patrick Galbraith and Grant Connell
Davis Cup — United States

WTA Tour

Pan Pacific Open — Kimiko Date
Lipton Championships — Steffi Graf
Family Circle Cup — Conchita Martinez
Italian Open — Martinez
German Open — Arantxa Sanchez Vicario
Dunsmuir Ltd. Open — Monica Seles
European Indoors — Iva Majoli
Philadelphia Women's Tennis Championships — Graf
WTA Tour — championships — Graf
Fed Cup — Spain
Hopman Cup (mixed team) — Germany

CYCLING

Tour de France — Miguel Indurain, Spain
Giro d'Italia — Tony Rominger, Switzerland
Vuelta a España — Laurent Jalabert, France
Tour de Suisse — Pavel Tonkov, Russia
Tour Mediterranean — Gianni Bugno, Italy
Tour des Flandres — Johann Museeuw, Belgium
Tour Dupont — Lance Armstrong, United States
Paris-Nice — Laurent Jalabert, France
Tirreno-Adriatico — Stefano Colagè, Italy
Milan-San Remo — Laurent Jalabert, France
Paris-Roubaix — Franco Ballerini, Italy
Walloon Arrow Classic — Laurent Jalabert, France
Liege-Bastogne-Liege — Mauro Gianetti, Switzerland
Amstel Gold Race — Mauro Gianetti, Switzerland
Paris-Tours — Nicola Minali, Italy
San Sebastian Classic — Lance Armstrong, United States
Kmart Classic — Lance Armstrong, United States
U.S. pro championships — Norm Alvis, United States

WEIGHTLIFTING

World Championships

Men

54 — Zhang Xiangsen, China
59 — Leonidas Sabanis, Greece
64 — Naim Suleymanoglu, Turkey
70 — Zhan Xugang, China
76 — Pablo Lara, Cuba
83 — Pyrrhos Dimas, Greece
91 — Alexei Petrov, Russia
99 — Kakhi Kakhiashvili, Greece
108 — Igor Razorenov, Ukraine
108 plus — Alexei Chemerkhin, Russia

Women

46 — Guan Hong, China
50 — Liu Xiuhua, China
54 — Karnam Malleswari, India
59 — Chen Xiaomin, China
64 — Chen J., China
70 — Tang Weifang, China
76 — Li Yan, China
83 — Chen Shu-Chi, Taiwan
83 plus — Erika Takacs, Hungary

ATHLETICS

Men

100 — Donovan Bailey, Canada
200 — Michael Johnson, United States
400 — Michael Johnson, United States
800 — Wilson Kipketer, Kenya
1,500 — Noureddine Morceli, Algeria
5,000 — Ismael Kirui, Kenya
10,000 — Haile Gebrselassie, Ethiopia
Marathon — Martin Fisz, Spain
110 hurdles — Allen Johnson, United States
400 hurdles — Derrick Adkins, United States
3,000 steeplechase — Moses Kiptanui, Kenya
400 relay — Canada
1,600 relay — United States
20km walk — Michele Didoni, Italy
50km walk — Valentin Kononen, Finland
High jump — Troy Kemp, Bahamas
Pole vault — Sergei Bubka, Ukraine
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Discus — Lars Riedel, Germany

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SAILING

Americas Cup — Black Magic I, New Zealand
BOC Challenge (around-the-world) — Christophe Auguin, France
Admiral's Cup — Italy

SKIING

ALPINE: World Cup

Men

Overall — Alberto Tomba, Italy
Downhill — Luc Alphand, France
Super-G — Peter Runggaldier, Italy
Giant Slalom — Alberto Tomba, Italy
Slalom — Alberto Tomba, Italy

Women

Overall — Vreni Schneider, Switzerland
Downhill — Picabo Street, Sun Valley, Idaho
Super-G — Katja Seizinger, Germany
Giant Slalom — Schneider, Switzerland
Slalom — Vreni Schneider, Switzerland

HANDBALL

World Championship

Men — France

European Cup

Men — Elgorriaga Bidasoa (Spain)

Women — Hypo Niederrhein (Austria)

HORSE RACING

U.S. Thoroughbred (flat)

Kentucky Derby — Thunder Gulch

Preakness — Timber Country

Belmont — Thunder Gulch

Breeders Cup Juvenile — Unbridled's Song

Breeders Cup juvenile fillies — Desert Stormer

Breeders Cup sprint — My Flag

Breeders Cup mile — Ridgewood Pearl

Breeders Cup distaff — Inside Information

Breeders Cup turf — Northern Spur

Breeders Cup classic — Cigar

International

Melbourne Cup — Dorianus

Japan Cup — Lando

English Derby — Lammtarra

Irish Derby — Winged Love

Prix de l'Arc Triomphe — Lammtarra

JUDO

Men

Open — David Khakhaleishvili, Georgia

Heavy — Miguel Aurelio, Brazil

Women

Open — Kim Sung-Wyun, South Korea

Heavy — Josephine Horton, Britain

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70 — Tang Weifang, China
76 — Li Yan, China
83 — Chen Shu-Chi, Taiwan
83 plus — Erika Takacs, Hungary

IAAF outdoor Grand Prix

Men

Overall — Moses Kiptanui, Kenya
200 — Michael Johnson, United States
800 — Benson Koech, Kenya
3000 — Haile Gebrselassie, Ethiopia
3000 Steeplechase — Moses Kiptanui, Kenya
110 hurdles — Mark Crear, United States
Pole vault — Okkert Brits, South Africa
Long jump — Ivan Pedroso, Cuba
Discus — Dmitriy Shevchenko, Russia
Javelin — Jan Zelezny, Czech Republic

Women

Overall — Maria Mutola, Mozambique
200 — Gwen Torrence, United States
800 — Maria Mutola, Mozambique
3000 — Sonia O'Sullivan, Ireland
400 hurdles — Kim Batten, United States
High jump — Inga Babakova, Ukraine
Triple jump — Anna Biryukova, Russia
Shot put — Astrid Kumberuss, Germany

Marathons

Los Angeles — Rolando Vera, Ecuador; Nadia Prasad, France
World Marathon Cup —

Marathons

Los Angeles — Rolando Vera, Ecuador; Nadia Prasad, France
World Marathon Cup —

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World Marathon Cup —

Marathons

Los Angeles — Rolando Vera, Ecuador; Nadia Prasad, France
World Marathon Cup —

Hammer throw — Andrey Abduvaliyev, Tajikistan

Javelin — Jan Zelezny, Czech Republic
Decathlon — Dan O'Brien, United States

Women

100 — Gwen Torrence, United States
200 — Merlene Ottey, Jamaica
400 — Marie-Jose Percec, France
800 — Ana Fidelia Quirot, Cuba
1,500 — Hassiba Boulmerka, Algeria
5,000 — Sonia O'Sullivan, Ireland

Professional

World Series — Atlanta Braves

American League — Cleveland Indians

National League — Atlanta Braves

Professional

World Series — Atlanta Braves

American League — Cleveland Indians

National League — Atlanta Braves

Knicks lose; Sonics hammer Celtics 124-85

LANDOVER (R) — The Washington Bullets broke a 15-game losing streak against the New York Knicks Friday, 127-120 in overtime, but had a bad scare when star forward Chris Webber reinjured his left shoulder.

New York, playing without centre Patrick Ewing, never led until overtime, but George Muresan's two free throws with 1:05 left in the extra session snapped a tie and Robert Pack hit 9-of-10 free throws in the final 40 seconds as the Bullets beat the Knicks for the first time since November 13, 1992.

It was just the second win in Washington's last 23 games against the Knicks.

Juwan Howard scored 27 points and pack added 25 points for Washington, which lost Webber to a strained left shoulder with 3:53 remaining in OT. Webber had 19 points and seven assists.

Webber drove the lane and lowered his shoulder into New York forward Charles Oakley who fell to the floor. Oakley swiped at the ball and Webber fell awkwardly, staying on the floor for four or five minutes as scary visions of season-ending surgery flashed through the Bullets' minds.

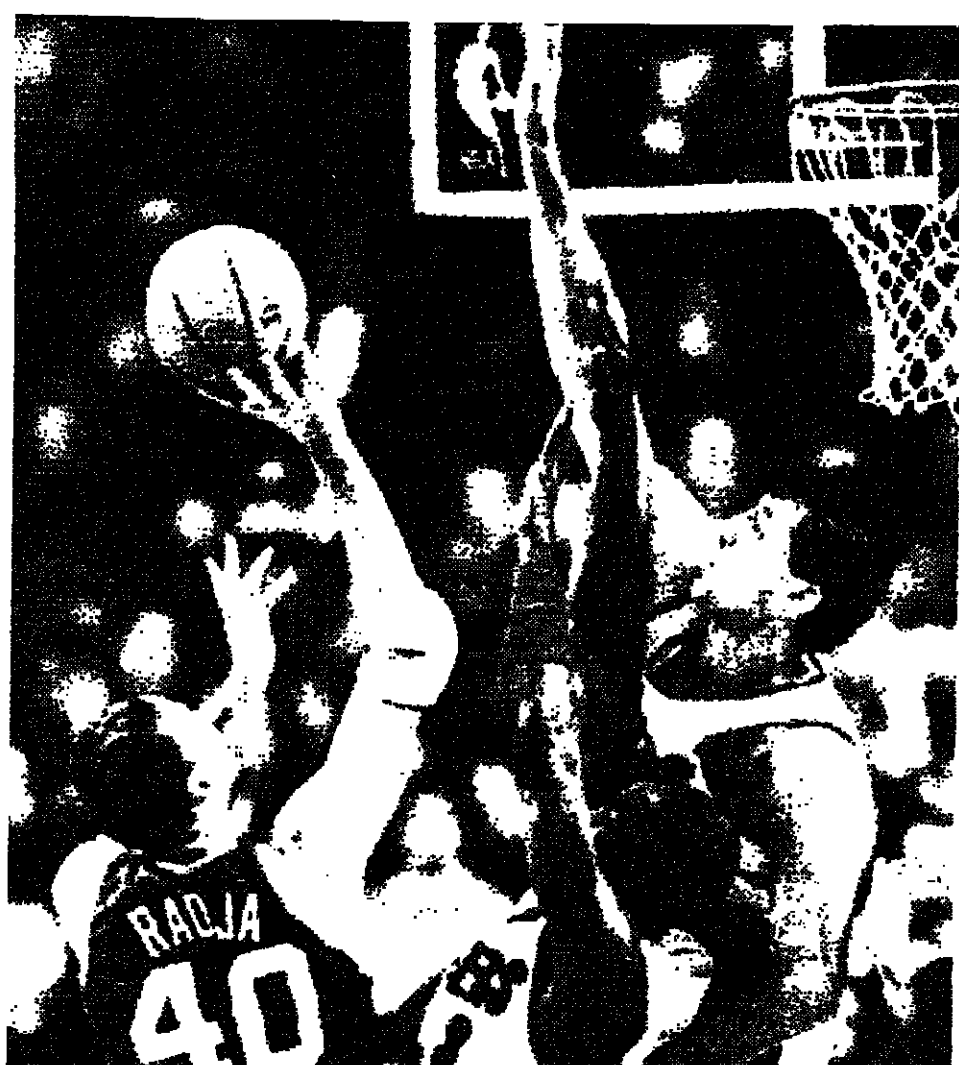
"It's not a dislocation," general manager John Nash said. "It's the same shoulder, but I repeat, it is not a dislocation. He aggravated it when he fell on it."

"The news is better than we first expected. The soreness will dictate what will happen, that is the key. The good news is that we get him back in the near future."

"It couldn't be a lot worse," Bullets coach Jim Lynam said. "They're saying it's a strain. It wasn't as serious as I first thought. When he didn't get up, I thought it was separated again."

Anthony Mason scored a season-high 30 points and Derek Harper added 21 for New York, which came back from a 16-point deficit in the final 11:27 of the fourth quarter.

Ewing sprained an ankle in the Knicks' loss to Cleveland



Dino Radja (40) of the Boston Celtics tries to shoot over the defense of Clifford Robinson (3) and Chris Dudley (right) of the Portland Trail Blazers during the first half of their NBA game earlier this week (Reuters photo)

Thursday, New York has dropped three of its last four games.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 29 points and Scottie Pippen added 23 and eight assists as the Bulls avenged Tuesday's loss with a 120-93 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Indiana snapped Chicago's 13-game winning streak Tuesday.

"We came out and defended our home court tonight," Jordan said. "I certainly had the idea tonight that I was going for the basket early. I wanted to set a good tone for the team. But ultimately it was our defence that won the game."

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored 20 of his 26 points in the first half as the Super-sonics shelled the Boston Celtics 124-85, their worst loss in nearly 30 years.

Seattle has won four straight and 13 of its last 16. The Sonics have won eight straight at home, where they are 13-1.

The Celtics have lost five of their last six.

Shawn Kemp scored 24 points and Hersey Hawkins added 20 for Seattle. Rick Fox's 14 points led the Celtics, who shot 33 per cent (30-of-90) from the field.

In Charlotte, Kendall Gill had 16 points, 10 assists, nine

rebounds and blocked James Robinson's potential game-tying three-pointer at the buzzer as the Hornets handed the Portland Trail Blazers their sixth straight road loss, 102-99.

Scott Burrell scored 20 points and Glen Rice added 18 for the Hornets. Clifford Robinson had 26 points and Arvydas Sabonis 21 for Portland.

In Atlanta, Latrell Sprewell scored a season-high 32 points and rookie Joe Smith added 22 as the Golden State Warriors snapped a two-game losing streak with a 117-96 victory over the Hawks.

B.J. Armstrong scored 10 of his 21 points in the final period for the Warriors.

In Orlando, Shaquille O'Neal had 25 points and 10 rebounds as the Magic routed the Los Angeles Clippers 122-98 for their 23rd straight home victory.

Brian Shaw recorded his second career triple-double

Edwards and Rush honoured by Queen Elizabeth

LONDON (AP) — Europe's Ryder Cup captain Bernard Gallacher, triple jump world champion and record holder Jonathan Edwards and soccer striker Ian Rush are three leading British sports stars honoured Saturday by Queen Elizabeth II.

Gallacher, the non-playing captain whose European team won back the Ryder Cup from the United States at Oak Hill, Rochester, N.Y., in September, becomes an officer of the order of British Empire (OBE).

Edwards, who twice broke the triple jump world record with back-to-back jumps on the way to the world title in Göteborg, Sweden, in August, receives the less prestigious MBE (Member of the Order of British Empire).

Rush, who spent a season with Italy's Juventus in 1987-88 but has scored 224 goals in 14 years with Liverpool, also receives the MBE.

Two leading rugby union players, Welshman Robert Jones and England's Dean Richards, are awarded the MBE while England's rugby league captain, Wigan's Shaun Edwards, gets the OBE.

Richards, the world's most capped back row forward, receives an award despite gaining a 14-day suspension earlier this season for stamping and punching during a game for Leicester.

Korean club crowned Asian soccer champions

RIYADH (AFP) — South Korea's Ilhwa Chunma needed sudden-death extra time to beat Saudi champions Al Nassr 1-0 and lift the 15th Asian Club Championship at the King Fahd International Stadium Friday.

The world's most capped player, Al Nassr captain Majed Abdullah, who has played more than 140 times for his country, was unable to stop his side slipping to defeat in a match that was decided for the first time by a dramatic sudden-death goal.

A clinical finish from substitute Lee Tae Hong just four minutes before the end of the extra period saw the Koreans emulate the 1985 feat of compatriots Daewoo Royals.

The defeat for Al Nassr may mark the retirement of Abdullah who will decide on his playing future in the next few days.

However, Al Nassr and Majed Abdullah did have their chances to win the game and the Saudi Arabian champions were denied only by the brilliance of Ilhwa defender Stepuhkin Gennadi.

The Russian, whose contract with the Korean club expires this weekend, controlled Ilhwa's defence as the Koreans stifled the free-flowing football of Al Nassr.

Abdul Aziz Al Jenobi and Muhaisen Aljamal tested Ilhwa Chunma goalkeeper Valerii Sarychev in the first five minutes.

The Koreans rarely threatened the Al Nassr goal but they made no mistake four minutes before the penalty shoot-out was due.

Korea's 1994 player of the year Ko Jeong Woon controlled a cross-field ball inside the penalty area before cutting back to Lee who squeezed the ball past Mudhi Aldosari at his near post.

Iran's Saipa beat last year's champions Thai Farmers Bank 2-1 in the third place play-off. The Iranian champions as they hit the crossbar through Sabih Saran before Phanuwat's 42nd minute close-range header put the Thais ahead.

The Thais doubled their lead 16 minutes after half-time when Worawoot's excellent first touch allowed him to lob Jalal Mohbobbi in the Saipa goal.

Saipa pulled a goal back within a minute when Mehdi Fomonzadegan curled a free-kick around the Farmers' wall from the edge of the penalty area.

Favre edges Smith as top offensive player

NEW YORK (AP) — Brett Favre needed one of the greatest passing seasons in recent years to edge Emmitt Smith as the NFL offensive player of the year.

The Green Bay quarterback believes he's only getting started.

It was just an awesome year offensively for the whole unit," said Favre, who won the award with 38 votes from a nationwide panel of 88 sports writers and broadcasters.

Smith, the Dallas Cowboys' star running back, was second in balloting conducted by the Associated Press with 33 votes.

Favre had as many touchdowns as passes as votes. His 38 touchdowns were the most

ever in the NFC, third only to Dan Marino's seasons of 48 and 44. He passed for 4,413 yards, hitting 359 of 570 (63 per cent).

And he did it without Sterling Sharpe, who was cut after requiring neck surgery that could end his career.

"Last year I thought was very productive, too, and going into the season, I didn't think we could be as productive as we were last year," said Favre, a five-year veteran.

"But we were — 38 touchdown passes, almost 4,500 yards. You know, if I played the whole second half of the Minnesota game (which he missed with a sprained left ankle), I probably would have gotten 4,500

Nigeria pull out of African finals

LAGOS (R) — Nigeria have withdrawn from next month's African Nations' Cup in South Africa.

"Despite our deep respect for the international sporting bodies, we have decided that Nigeria should withdraw from the tournament because there is no guarantee for the safety of the lives of our players in South Africa," Sports Minister Jim Nwobodo said on Saturday.

"We have been getting threats which bordered seriously on life and death. Until late last night, we tried to get assurance from South Africa on the safety of our delegation but this failed," Nwobodo added.

Eder captures 3rd slalom

SEMMERING, Austria (R) — With several of the favourites skidding out, Austria's Eder stayed on her skis to collect her third World Cup Slalom victory of the season on Saturday.

Urged on by a large, partisan crowd, lined 10 deep at places along the icy, wind-swept Hirschenkogel course, Eder finished with a two-run combined time of one minute 40.70 seconds, giving the Austrian women their seventh victory of the season.

Fourth after the first leg, Eder turned in the second fastest time of the second run, blitzing down in 48.55 seconds. She then saw Sweden's Kristina Andersson and New Zealand's Claudia Riegler fail to better her time.

And the 25-year-old Austrian finally secured the victory when Urska Hrovat, the leader after the first leg, crashed out at the sixth gate.

The incident completed a frustrating weekend for the 22-year-old Slovenian, having also gone out in the first of back-to-back slaloms on Friday.

Marianne Kjoerstad of Norway had to settle for second in 1:40.98 while Andersson, who missed out on a place on the podium by 0.02 seconds, on Friday, took third with 1:41.02.

Switzerland's Marlies Oester had the fastest time of the second run of 48.19, vaulting her from 12th to fourth with a combined time of 1:41.18.

Sweden's Pernilla Wiberg, winner of the last two slaloms including one Friday on the same course, fell early in her first run and angrily pounded the snow as she skidded

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British soccer frozen out

LONDON (R) — The English and Scottish soccer programmes were decimated on Saturday by the arctic weather conditions.

Only 13 matches in England and three in Scotland had survived four hours before the kick off.

The English Premier League fared best with seven of the 10 matches still scheduled to go ahead.

Most Premier League clubs have underseal heating and with all-seater stadiums there is no problem of danger to spectators from frozen terraces.

One of the matches which looked certain to go ahead was at Old Trafford, where former French international defender William Prunier was set to line-up with compatriot Eric Cantona for Manchester United against Queen's Park Rangers.

Prunier, 28, completes a two-week loan from Bordeaux on Sunday, but the French football federation have given permission for him to play.

United can cut Newcastle's lead in the table to four points, as the leaders' match at West Ham was one of the three Premier League casualties. The other matches called off were Aston Villa vs. Sheffield Wednesday and Southampton vs. Manchester City.

Elsewhere just six league matches had survived in England and three in Scotland.

The only Premier League match on in Scotland was between leaders Glasgow Rangers and Hibernian.

SRI LANKANS ONLY

تحت رعاية قنصلية سري لانكا في عمان وبإشراف السيد توفيق أبو خجيل القنصل السري لانكي في عمان

سوف يقام حفل موسيقي بمناسبة رأس السنة الميلادية وقدم عام ١٩٩٦ يحتوي الحفل على مقطوعات موسيقية من سري لانكا وذلك يوم الاثنين الموافق ١٩٩٦/١/١ في قاعة ماريوسف بجانب القنصلية السري لانكية

يبدأ الحفل في تمام الساعة ١٢.٣٠ ظهرا ، ويستمر حتى الساعة ٤.٣٠ مساء .

ප්‍රධාන වශයෙන් පලමුවරට බෙහෙවින් ඉදිරිපත් කරන සංගීත සැසඳු රසික බෙහෙවින් සිත්

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වේලාව: 12.30 සිට 04.30

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & YANNAH HIRSCH
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BELIEVE, BELIEVE

East-West vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ Q 5
♥ K 8 5
♦ K 10 7 4 2
♣ A K J

WEST
♠ 7 6 4 3 2
♥ 7
♦ Q 8 6 5
♣ 10 9 2

EAST
♠ A K J 9 8
♥ A Q 4
♦ Q Q
♣ Q 8 5 5

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
INT Pass 4♥ Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♠

Defenders who followcard at every opportunity will fool partner more than declarer. The ideal time to paint a deceptive picture of your holding is when partner cannot be affected, as was the case in this deal. It cropped up during the Reisinger Team Championship, which is one of the few board-a-match championships in existence — scoring more than the opponents on any deal earns 1 point, 1/2 for a tie and zero for a loss.

North-South were not playing transfer bids, hence the direct route to four hearts in one room while North became declarer in the other. There, after the queen of diamonds lead, declarer won and successfully fished for the queen of hearts first. Declarer still had to lose a trick to the ace of trumps, and emerged with an overtrick.

With South as declarer, this hand would have attracted no attention had West led a spade — the defenders would have been assured of three tricks. However, West chose to lead a club, thereby giving partner an opportunity to star.

Declarer won the opening lead in dummy and came to hand with the ace of diamonds, picking up East's

PHILADELPHIA Pierce Brosnan as James Bond 007 in GOLDENEYE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:05, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.	PLAZA Dangerous Minds Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 * The Santa Clause Shows: 12:30, 5:00	CONCORD CONCORD "1" Next Karate Kid Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" * Batman For ever Shows: 3:30, 8:30 * ASSASSINS Shows: 6, 10:30	AMMOUN THEATRE & CINEMA TEL: 618274 - 618275 After the renovation ... Presents to its dear clients the strongest Arab & Foreign films as of 1 Jan. 96	Nabil & Hisham's Theatre TEL: 625155 Shows begin on Dec. 19, 1995 and continue on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (three days a week) only. The programme continues until the start of the holy month of Ramadan. The Show is entitled: "Ahlan Tatbie" Welcome Normalisation For reservation call 625155
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NATO rejects Serb demand to postpone Sarajevo unification

ZUPANJA, Croatia (AP) — NATO rejected rebel Serbs' demand to postpone the reunification of Sarajevo under the rule of their former enemies, while flooding forced the U.S. army to delay plans Saturday to move into Bosnia over a floating bridge.

U.S. forces also sustained their first casualty Saturday, a soldier who was wounded by a landmine in the northern Bosnian town of Bijela and rushed to the U.S. mobile military hospital at Zupanja.

Also Saturday, Brigadier General Ole Lysgaard Jorgensen of Denmark told reporters in Zagreb that hostile armies were withdrawing on all fronts, and pullbacks as specified by the peace treaty should be completed by Jan. 19.

The peace plan signed Dec. 14 in Paris calls for the Bosnian government to resume control of Serb-held areas of Sarajevo by March 19. However, Serbs, who have controlled some of those districts throughout the 3½-year war say they never will submit to rule by the Muslim-led government.

In seeking the delay, rebel Serb leaders said Sarajevo Serbs would flee if the transfer of power were not delayed. They warned that many, fearing reprisals from their old enemies and new rulers, would dig up bodies of their dead relatives to take with them.

Serbs suggested the fragile peace accord could be jeopardised without a delay. The Bosnian government has insisted that the transfer take place on time, and that Serbs with blood on their hands be brought to justice.

U.S. Admiral Leighton Smith, overall commander of the NATO force, had said earlier this week that he would consider shifting the deadline to delay the transfer of power. On Saturday, Capt. Mark Van Dyke read a statement from Adm. Smith saying the transfer of authority would begin Feb. 4, as indicated in the peace agree-

ment.

In his statement, Adm. Smith urged Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo to stay put, saying the NATO force would provide for their security.

Meanwhile, U.S. army engineers gave up plans to move troops and armour into Bosnia on Saturday over flooding bridge because flooding made it too risky.

"We'll do it tomorrow morning," said Brigadier General James O'Neal, announcing the one-day postponement.

Gen. O'Neal said icy water spilled over the banks of the Sava River, separating Croatia and Bosnia, making part of the Croatian side too unsteady to anchor the pontoon bridge. He said the land will be reinforced with gravel before the bridge is finished and the crossing attempted.

The flooding is the latest setback in the deployment of 20,000 American soldiers and their hundreds of tanks, trucks and other equipment. The operation already has been delayed by bureaucracy, snow and fog.

Maj. Gen. William Nash, who will command the American troops patrolling north-eastern Bosnia, said he still expects all of his troops to be in position in a month.

A column of M1-Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles was lined up on the Croatian side of the river near Orasje, a town 100 kilometres north of Sarajevo.

Croatia's Hina news agency quoted U.S. engineers in Zupanja — on the Bosnian side of the river — as saying that due to flooding, the bridge would be some 130 metres longer than previously planned — 460 metres in total. It will be four metres wide.

By early afternoon Saturday, a 230-metre stretch of bridge reaching across a flood plain created two days ago when the Sava overflowed its Croatian bank was completed, and the engineers were bridging the river itself. A light coating of snow

dusted the bridge sections, contrasting with the gray of the sky above and the icy water below.

With the Americans becoming a familiar sight on the banks of the Sava, only a few Bosnian government soldiers and about a dozen civilians were on hand to watch the swollen, sluggish river carrying slowly moving army barges and boats and the three Blackhawk Choppers circling above.

NATO's supreme commander praised their work.

"The troops are rising to the occasion," said U.S. Gen. George Joulwan, shortly after his helicopter landed on the Croatian side of the river. "It's come a long way," he said of the bridge-building operation.

Despite the Americans' bridge troubles, Gen. Jorgensen said 35,000 of the 60,000 NATO-led troops that will enforce peace in Bosnia had been deployed in Bosnia and the surrounding region by Saturday.

The American soldier injured Saturday by a landmine was not identified, but his condition was said to be stable. Maj. Simon Haselock, a spokesman for the peace mission, said the incident occurred near the Croatian border.

One soldier who would not give his name said the victim was injured in the leg.

In Washington, a senior White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the soldiers' vehicle, a Humvee jeep, was destroyed.

Though all warring factions are committed to removing mines or mapping their locations under terms of the Bosnian peace treaty, the process has just begun and tens of thousands of explosive devices lie uncharted.

The location of many never will be established because battlefields have shifted countless times during the nearly 4-year-old war.



KING GRADUATES MILITARY COURSES: His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday decorates Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Ali Ben Nayef with Al Hussein Golden Medal for Excellence awarded to her in view of high shooting skills. The awarding ceremony took place as the King, accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Noor, attended the graduation ceremony of several Royal Guards courses. King Hussein distributed awards to winners of various military activities. King Hussein and Queen Noor, who were received at the ceremony by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lieutenant-General Abdul Hafez Kaabneh, attended various shows of military skills performed by the graduates. The ceremony was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah, Prince Ali, Prince Hashem, Prince Hamzah, Princess Aisha and Princess Zein. In addition, it was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the King's private advisor Prince Ali Ben Nayef, the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and other senior officials (Petra photo)

Prince Hassan calls for expanding inter-faith dialogue to counter extremism

Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Saturday called for expanding inter-faith dialogue in the world in order to reach a universal understanding on ways to combat religious extremism.

Speaking at the Royal Court during a meeting with the Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Anti-Semitism, which has 12,000 members in 86 parliaments all over the world, the Crown Prince said that the Islamic world is deeply concerned with the spread of fear of Islam, or what has become to be known as "Islamophobia."

The delegation's visit to the Kingdom came at an invitation by Prince Hassan to exchange views with Jordanian parliamentarians and

lend a helping hand to an initiative launched by the Crown Prince on means to establish a body to counter discrimination, attacks and harassment against Muslims all over the world, especially in Europe, which has a sizeable Muslim community.

The Crown Prince, an associated member of the council, said that the unjustified discrimination against Islam in Western countries as mainly represented in attributing acts of terrorism and extremism to Muslims, requires from the Western media and scholars to be objective in dealing with Islam.

A study carried out in Britain said that 70,000 cases of racial and ethnic attacks take place annually, with the majority of the vic-

tims being Muslims. The five-member representatives of the Council who met briefly with speakers of both the upper and lower houses of Parliament, as well as a group of parliamentarians, outlined the duties of their council. They also briefed the parliamentarians on the structure of their organisation, whose membership is mostly non-Jewish and is restricted to parliament members. Associated membership in the council includes both ex-members of parliament and distinguished individuals involved in parliamentary and government institutions.

Greville Janner, the chairman of the council and Labour member of the British Parliament told Jordanian parliamentarians that sponsorship of any estab-

lishment to counter discrimination against Muslims should not come from Arab or Muslim countries but rather from individuals. He stressed that such a proposed body should be operating from a non-Arab and non-Islamic country, saying this would be the source of the body's strength.

Except for the "miscommunication" which took place Thursday at the premises of the Arab Thought Forum (ATF) between the delegation and some Jordanian parliamentarians and scholars, "all other meetings went well," an informed source who asked not to be identified told the Jordan Times.

The "miscommunication" developed because the Jordanian side was not informed before hand about the purpose of the meeting.

U.S. state bars media from interviewing prisoners

SACRAMENTO (R) — California authorities, in a bid to keep prisoners from becoming media celebrities, said that news organisations have been temporarily barred from interviewing state inmates. The ban, which applies to all 135,000 prisoners in the state's 31 prisons, was put into effect while the state youth and adult correctional agency reviews its interview policies, said J.P. Tremblay, assistant secretary of the agency. "They're sent to prison to do time, not to be on prime time," Tremblay said. Tremblay cited television appearances by criminals peddling their memoirs and other products, such as convicted mass murderer Charles Manson, who sells songs and T-shirts.

Wife recants sex slave story

MIAMI (R) — A young wife who claimed two years ago that her husband turned her into a sex slave has recanted, saying she made up the story because she feared losing her two children in a custody fight. Miami prosecutors Thursday were trying to determine whether to file perjury charges against Mabel Jentsch, 23. She told police two years ago that her husband aimed a loaded shotgun at her head, turned on the family's video camera and forced her to perform sex acts in the couple's bedroom, nicknamed "the dungeon." The lurid allegations surfaced during a 1993 divorce proceeding between Jentsch and Steven Jentsch, 32. When her husband allegedly threatened to use the sexually explicit video tapes against her to win custody of the couple's two children, Jentsch responded by complaining to police that her husband abused her.

U.S. executive pleads guilty to drowning wife to avoid trial

ST. LOUIS (R) — A wealthy New Orleans real estate executive has pleaded guilty in the 1986 drowning death of his wife and began serving the balance of a 30-year prison sentence to avoid a third trial. Edward Post, who pleaded guilty this week to second degree murder, was convicted in two earlier jury trials for the murder of his wife, Julie. But both verdicts were overturned, the first because a court deputy allegedly had sex with a juror and the second because hearsay evidence was introduced.

Diana must have 'dignified, worthwhile' role — Major

LONDON (AFP) — Princess Diana should play a role in public life even if she divorces her husband Prince Charles, Prime Minister John Major has said in a BBC interview. Amid feverish speculation in Britain over a divorce, his comments indicated strong support for Princess Diana's stated desire to have an "ambassadorial" role regardless of the state of her marriage. "Whatever may happen in future between the Prince of Wales and the Princess of Wales, she is the mother of a future king, so the Princess of Wales must have a role in public life, and as I see it always will have a role," Mr. Major said. "It needs to be a dignified role and it needs to be a worthwhile role," he added.

Iranian vice-president Habibi cancels Damascus visit

TEHRAN (AFP) — Vice-President Hassan Habibi Saturday called off a visit to Syria planned for next week, as Iranian newspapers launched an unprecedented attack on Damascus.

The president's office said the visit was postponed indefinitely, without giving a reason.

Iranian diplomats in Damascus said Thursday that Mr. Habibi would travel to Syria for a meeting of the two countries' joint commission.

The visit was not officially announced in Tehran.

The postponement came amid furor in Iranian news-

papers over Syria's resumption of peace talks with Israel and its support for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a territorial dispute with Iran.

A pro-government newspaper said Saturday that Syria, Iran's main ally in the Middle East, was shifting its stand away from Tehran in favour of pro-Western countries in the region.

Syria is "seeking to change its regional diplomacy" at the cost of "forgetting old friends who helped it during its isolation in the Middle East in the 1980s and supplied it with oil," Abrar daily charged.

It complained of Syrian

"ingratitude." "Syria is now humiliating itself in search of peace with Israel and has its representatives sit at the same table with the Zionists for dinner," the newspaper said.

It was the first such attack by an Iranian newspaper on Damascus.

The Islamic Republic of Iran rejects peace with its arch-enemy Israel and has urged Arab countries to quit the Middle East peace process.

On Friday, the foreign ministry criticised the Damascus Declaration — a pact signed by Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf Arab states

in 1991 — for backing the UAE in its territorial dispute with Iran.

"These countries had better direct their attention at the Zionist regime rather than issue such statements which can only lead to division and misunderstanding" among Muslim states in the region, it said.

At the end of a meeting in Damascus on Thursday, the eight Arab foreign ministers voiced support for the UAE in its conflict with Iran over Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb islands, which are currently in Iranian hands.

Egyptian editor convicted for anti-Islamist article

CAIRO (R) — A Cairo court has sentenced a magazine editor to two years' hard labour for an article that criticised Muslim fundamentalists for raising cases against artists and intellectuals, court sources said on Saturday.

The sentence, passed on Thursday, is the latest victory for the plaintiff Sheikh Youssef Al Badri, a former member of parliament turned fundamentalist preacher, in his war against anti-Islamist intellectuals.

Mahmoud Tohami, editor of the weekly Rose Al Youssef Magazine, was also ordered to pay 500 pounds (\$147) compensation to the plaintiff.

Mr. Badri and 25 Islamist lawyers raised the case against Mr. Tohami last year after he ran an unsigned opinion piece that claimed the cleric and others like him were using courtrooms to turn Egypt into their vision of an Islamic state.

Mr. Tohami pleaded not guilty and said the article did not libel or insult anyone. It was a warning to Egyptian society that the battle between fundamentalists and

society generally had entered the legal arena. Mr. Tohami said he would appeal.

The sources said the presiding judge, Hassan Al Tohami — no relation of the defendant — was the same judge who earlier this year ruled in favour of a court case to ban a film by director Youssef Chahine.

The film, called "L'Emigre," was judged to have violated Islamic teaching by depicting the life of Joseph, whom Muslims consider a prophet.

The ban of the film was lifted after Mr. Chahine successfully appealed.

Mr. Badri has been the instigator or co-plaintiff in several recent court cases which intellectuals and artists in Egypt consider to be symptoms of increasing conservatism.

He joined a suit brought by Islamist lawyers that ended with the court-ordered annulment earlier this year of a marriage between a happy couple on the grounds that the writings of the husband, a university professor, made him an apostate.

UAE to curb pollution caused by oil tankers

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has decided to take action against oil tankers and other vessels polluting its water with sludge and industrial waste following a surge in such incidents.

The Federal Environment Committee, created last year to act as an environment ministry, has almost completed a draft law on the protection of the Gulf country's environment in sea, land and air.

The law, published in Al Khaleej newspaper on Saturday, is to be ratified by President Sheikh Zayed Ibn Sultan Al Nayahan, officials said.

It introduced a fine of up to 500,000 dirhams (\$136,240) against ships dumping oil sludge, industrial waste, polluted water and other harmful materials into the UAE's territorial waters and beaches.

The law followed a surge in waste-dumping incidents and calls by local fishermen for action against those vessels on the grounds and polluting their sandy beaches.

Most of the pollution incidents were reported off the

ports of Fujairah and Khor-fakkan in the Gulf of Oman, one of the busiest seas in the world.

More than 30,000 oil tankers and merchant ships pass through the Gulf of Oman towards the strategic Straits of Hormuz every year to transport crude and other commodities to and from regional states, which supply nearly a quarter of the world's total oil exports.

Gulf officials have singled out oil tankers, accusing them of dumping sludge and other waste when they clean their tanks before heading for Gulf terminals to lift other crude shipments.

Regional countries have failed to stop such acts given their small naval capabilities and lack of cooperation.

Experts have warned against a surge in marine pollution in the Gulf due to waste-dumping, leaks from oil terminals and pipelines and ship accidents. They estimate more than one million barrels of crude find their way into the shallow Gulf waters every year, making the region the most polluted sea.

The Gulf has already been hit by major pollution acci-

dents, including the alleged dumping of nearly six million barrels of crude by Iraq during the Gulf war. Another slick of two million barrels was caused when Iraqi jets raided Iran's giant oilfield of Noruz at the start of their 1980-1988 conflict.

The conflict later spilled into the so-called tanker war, in which more than 500 oil tankers, many of which were loaded, were attacked.

Oman was the first Gulf Arab state to take action against waste-dumping vessels, when it decided last year to step up sea and air patrols and impose fines of up to one million riyals (\$2.6 million) against violators.

The new UAE law empowered local authorities to board any national or foreign vessel to check its compliance with environment rules, which also stipulated they must carry anti-pollution equipment.

"Ships of all nationalities are banned from dumping oil and sludge into the UAE water. In case of an accident, the ship owner should be responsible for operations to stop the leakage and fight pollution," the law said.

'Widow of man slain by Israeli agents should be compensated'

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli minister said Saturday Israel should compensate the widow of a man thought to have been killed by Israeli agents who mistook him for a Palestinian guerrilla in Norway 22 years ago.

Science and Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni said if Norway asked Israel to compensate the widow of slain Moroccan waiter Ahmad Bouchiki, she would support the request.

The late Israeli General Abaron Yariv confirmed in a 1993 interview that an Israeli

hit squad sent to the Norwegian town of Lillehammer to kill the Palestinian who masterminded the murder of 11 Israeli athletes in Munich, killed Mr. Bouchiki instead.

At the time Gen. Yariv served as Prime Minister Golda Meir's adviser against terrorism, Israel has never formally taken responsibility for the killing.

"Israel decided to do battle with terrorists, not with innocent people. And since Aharon Yariv admitted that we killed an innocent man, the man's family in my opinion

should be compensated," Ms. Aloni told Reuters.

Gen. Yariv said in the interview that Ms. Meir ordered the killing of all Palestinian guerrillas involved in the Munich massacre. Israeli agents killed more than 10 guerrillas before killing Mr. Bouchiki by mistake, Gen. Yariv said.

Israel's Maariv newspaper said this week Israel's ambassador to Norway sent a letter to Foreign Minister Ehud Barak recommending the Jewish state compensate Mr. Bouchiki's widow.

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